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The Inevitable





"HOW—WILL YOU HAVE—YOUR TEA?"

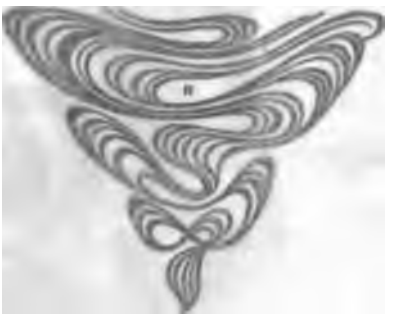
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The Inevitable

A Novel by

Philip Verrill Mighels

With Illustrations by John Wolcott Adams



Philadelphia MCMXCIX
J. B. Lippincott Company





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A Novel by

Philip Verrill Mighels

With a Frontispiece by John Wolcott Adams



Philadelphia Mdcccciii
J. B. Lippincott Company



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I

ROGER



The Inevitable

I

HOW TWO MAY MEET

It was out in nature's lap of greenery that a snake became the go-between of fate. All Missouri could not have shown a scene more fair. The level meadow was a firmament for flowers, in which the winding brook made a willowy way. Southward and westward the woods were thick, silent, and fragrant. Sunshine and clouds hung in the sky together. Everywhere the bees and locusts hummed of summer. The warm breeze fanned slowly by, over grass and blossoms, with wanton June indolence. The calm, the odor of moist new grass, the balminess, made the day a perfect thing.

The sleepy little town was a mile away. Therefore it appeared as if Genevra had all that theatre of beauty to herself. She was only a slip of a girl, an interesting, freckled child, with hair the color of nugget gold. Forbidden to wade in the brook, she was nevertheless out in the centre of the stream, boldly stepping from stone to stone, her dress held high

enough above her dainty boots to reveal something more than merely her slender, symmetrical ankles.

Thus she was when Roger came trudging in boyish haste along the path that led by the creek to the woods beyond. He halted at once when he suddenly found himself confronted by the sight of a bare-headed, gray-eyed girl, looking at him steadily and frankly.

She brushed a wisp of hair from her cheek as she dropped her skirt. Her face was warmly sun-colored; her lips were red and full. In her long-lashed, slumbrous eyes lurked a light of interest. She was not absolutely a pretty child, yet it seemed as if she were —to Roger.

A greater contrast than the boy presented to her Saxon type would have been difficult to find. He was dark—as dark as an Indian or a Cuban. His hair was glossy black. In his eyes, which were deep liquid brown, an expression slightly wistful, alternating with dancing lights, lent his countenance a singular interest. His nose was straight and delicately cut. His chin was strong. Tall as he was for a lad of sixteen years, he appeared even taller, so Indianesque was his carriage.

Genevra thought him the son of some noble red man. She hoped he would speak; she almost smiled with her slumbrous eyes, and then she became aware that so to comport herself with a stranger would not be precisely conventional. Her gaze therefore fell, resting on some

coils of cord he was holding in his hand, which she vaguely conjectured argued fishing.

She liked to look upon him; he was handsome; his face seemed so smooth, firm, and bronze-like in its modelling. She was sure he was "nice," but—she turned and began a retreat back up the brook, towards the bend where she had left her governess reading.

Roger had been rendered timid of contact with his kind. He liked this interesting girl, who had looked him straight in the eyes till his breath almost forgot to come, but he was of far too reserved a nature to address her, unencouraged. That she was not an ordinary girl he felt certain, immediately. Reluctantly he started along about his own affairs. However, he could not forego turning his head as he went, for his eyes refused readily to deliver up the treasure which they had conceived the picture to contain.

He saw Genevra glance twice in his direction as he walked on towards the near-by woods. Still gazing backward, he was presently tripped by a root and down he went suddenly, sprawling.

At this instant Genevra screamed shrilly in terror. Roger scrambled actively to his feet, and, while she continued to sound her cries, ran back to where she stood apparently rigid with fear.

She had started to step ashore from her place in the creek. A black-snake, of a size and aggressiveness

unusual had darted from the grass, resenting her intrusion. The reptile, undaunted by the babble of water, which had for a moment seemed a barrier between it and the girl, was coming at her savagely when Roger arrived.

The boy hated snakes above anything he knew. Nevertheless, he sprang swiftly into the water and threw himself forward on the serpent at the very feet of the frightened girl. He clutched the black body in his hands, feeling it creep in his grip as he did so. In a frenzy he beat the thing's head on the nearest rock, three, four, five times, and then, with all his force, flung off the writhing bracelets coiling about his wrist. He saw the fatally wounded serpent strike in the grass. It twisted there tortuously, as the belly squirmed upward to the sun. With a shudder he dashed his hand in the water for a quick rinsing, and turned about to the frightened Genevra, who had hastened to gain the bank.

"Oh!" she said, as she looked at him with her eyes ablaze. "Oh, thank you—thank you so much! The horrible thing! I'm so glad you came. I didn't know what I should do."

Roger's face became deeply red, under the bronze of of his dark complexion.

"I'm sorry I didn't kill him before you came," he said, confusedly.

"Did you know it was here?" she cried.

"No," he admitted, and a twinkle brightly lighted his eyes.

"Then you couldn't—you couldn't have killed it," she told him. "You were awfully good to come—and brave."

"He wouldn't have hurt me," said Roger. "But I'm glad.'" He looked at her furtively, for his heart was leaping, and this, he felt, she would be certain to detect if she looked into his eyes—like that. He was silent for a moment, gazing upon her. He saw no freckles. To him she was wondrously beautiful. "I think there won't be any more," he presently added, which was one way of saying that perhaps he had better be starting along on his mission.

"There might be more," said Genevra, alarmed at the bare possibility. "Oh, dear! I wonder if you are going up this way?" She indicated a point above, beyond the bend of the stream.

"No," Roger confessed, honestly. "I was going over there in the woods."

"Oh!"

There was another silence as they stood at the edge of the brook. Then she said, as if in compliance with any canons which might still be possible, 'My name is Genevra Harberton."

"Mine is Roger Gordon," said the boy. The intro-

duction being thus made complete, they looked at each other with the franker interest to which they felt they were now entitled.

"I like it here," said Roger, looking straight into her eyes.

"So do I," she responded. "Are you going fishing?"

"Oh, no," he replied, more at ease. "I was going to string my 'cello and see if the thing can be played."

"Your 'cello?" she echoed. "Have you got a 'cello in the woods?"

"Not a regular 'cello," Roger admitted. "It's one I made myself. But I think it ought to play."

"Are you going to play on it now?"

"Yes, if it will play. I'm going to string it and try." His eyes began to glow. He concluded, "I am sure it will make some kind of music."

"I like music," said Genevra. "I like it very, very much."

"Do you? I am glad you do. I have to love it," he told her, earnestly. In some eagerness he added, "Would you like to see the 'cello and hear me play?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Genevra, impulsively. "Take my hand,—there might be more horrid snakes."

She flushed as her hand so strangely tingled and burned in his, but she liked it. She had never liked anything in such a way as this before; it was all so

exciting. A new ecstasy raced in her veins as she and Roger started together for the forest.

"We do not have such snakes in England, so that is why I am not very brave about them," she said, in deference to any needed explanations.

Roger wanted no explanations. His heart was swinging tumultuously in his breast. He was almost faint, so powerful was some surging emotion which suddenly stirred a nature he had not known he possessed. He hardly dared to speak, lest this strange, wild joy should escape.

Their knees whipped aside the flowers where they walked. The snake, employed by fate for a go-between, had not been sent in vain.

II

AN UNDERLYING MOTIF

ROGER led the way through the growth to a small, shaded clearing in the forest. Near the centre of this stood the trunk of a tree long dead. Decades before, the wind had bent the tree backward, and then a fire had eaten it off in such a manner that its broad, round base still remained, though it was now but a hollow shell, while above this the wood tapered off abruptly to a straight piece not three inches wide nor two in thickness. This spike that pointed upward like a finger, was about two feet long. The stump was of some hard wood. Scraped of its charred surface, it was now a rusty dark red, seasoned by years of weather.

Before this stump Roger came to a halt. Reluctantly he released his hold of Genevra's hand.

"This is my 'cello," he said. "It won't take a minute to string it.'"

Genevra looked at this fragment of a tree. She saw that Roger had smoothed the wood, that he had cut two S-shaped holes through the hollow body, that already one string was secured across a rudely whittled bridge, and that ample pegs for other strings had

been thrust into holes at the top of the instrument's neck. But her wonder abandoned the 'cello soon. She preferred to look at Roger.

Even as he tuned the strings, his head was moving in quick little jerks, and joy and delight were dancing in his eyes. Already the spirit of music possessed him. Then his nostrils took on a fine-chiselled appearance, and his cheeks a look like metalic bronze, till the refinement of power seemed written on his countenance.

Genevra clasped her hands and pressed them hard against her throbbing bosom, as Roger, with swift movements, tightened the last of the cords with the twisting pegs. Why this excitement so enthralled her she could not have told.

She hardly knew where his bow had come from when the boy deftly drew it from the hollow of the tree. It was crude enough to advertise the fact that Roger had made it. He struck with it sharply across the strings, with a strong, eager movement.

The old tree shivered. The note was a hoarse, unsteady utterance, as if from some unwilling forest-spirit, who answered, while not yet awake, "I come."

A flush showed red beneath Roger's brown complexion. His eyes blazed. He tightened two of the strings anew and drew his bow again.

A thrill ran through the timber in the stump, down



to the very roots in the earth. The player trembled. His fingers then began to dance upon the strings, quietly, and the bow to glide with a swaying touch upon the vibrant instrument.

The rich, low notes that issued forth were not apparently made with any attempt at musical consequence. Yet presently all became orderly, ranging themselves in a weird bit of composition, suggesting rhythmical coherence. In the midst of this the bow lost its hold. Roger had forgotten his resin. He looked at Genevra, standing rapt before him, with the green of the woods behind her. A flame leaped up in his eyes, to answer the light in hers.

"I'll play something, made up just for you!" he cried to her, joyously.

With his bow in hand he sprang to a near-by pine-tree, out of which the sap had oozed and hardened on the bark. Upon these lumps he slashed his bow. With strokes swung wide and strong, he cut, as with a sword, at the pitch.

Then back to the 'cello he ran fiercely. Yet when he laid that lusty bow upon the strings, a bird-note of brightness chirruped forth from the contact. He laughed aloud and threw back his head. Then tones somewhat crudely adequate in the expression of his newly born emotions came forth in the improvisation that leaped from the heart of the tree.

AN UNDERLYING MOTIF

It was hardly music; it was far from being masterly or wonderful. But it was oddly original, pleasant, engaging, for its youthful recklessness and daring. Roger's eyes were dancing to its measure. His head and shoulders swayed to the rhythm. It was the beat of the time, banjo-like, but sensuous and dance-compelling as it stirred the pulse, that made the playing magnetic.

Genevra, still gazing upon him, her hands clasped and pressed against her bosom, was flushed with emotion. Her parted lips caught swiftly at quick, hot breaths. Her slumbrous eyes were afire. An all-unreasoning passion overflowed her heart and bosom. The music enthralled her immature fancy. Her nature was abandoned to sudden-born love.

Roger looked in her eyes and played what his fever commanded. The notes that flung from his bow conveyed youth's thoughtless, uncontainable delight.

In the midst of it all, away off towards the river, a deep, melancholy note was sounded, where a hound ran baying in the forest.

Yet the music, more stirring their hearts to dancing than before, went on. In its unfinished way it was voluptuous, intoxicating, irresistible. The two could hear nothing but the notes that so voiced what their hearts would have rung with their beating. Once again, and yet again, however, that deep, depressing

note haunted the woods, where the hound came nearer and nearer.

Gradually the bow was quieting, where it swung on the strings. The playing presently ceased. Roger permitted the bow to drop from his hand as he looked in Genevra's eyes. He laughed boyishly. Genevra had come so close. He could see not one of the freckles gathered in a little colony on her nose and cheeks. To him she was beautiful beyond belief.

"Genevra, I love to play for you," he whispered.

"I like it—I love it so," she answered, with a tremulous breath. Impulsively and childishly she put her arms about his neck and rested on his heart, trembling.

He held her close in his arms and kissed her burning lips.

The second of ecstasy was suddenly broken. With an echoing bellow, a hound crashed through the undergrowth not ten rods away, and came loping heavily up to the startled pair.

With a cry of dismay Genevra caught Roger by the hand, and together they ran. The dog overtook them swiftly. He plunged against the boy and nosed him nearly off his legs. Apparently satisfied with this, he let out a great note of melancholy and loped away. But near at hand another hound, not yet to be seen, bayed an answer. This was followed by a

note from a third great brute. Genevra cried to Roger to hasten faster, and breathlessly they darted on between the trees.

As if already they had scented their quarry, the hounds that had not yet seen the running pair now came rapidly towards them. In her fright Genevra tripped and partially fell. Roger was lifting her again to her feet, trying to assist her forward, when not only the two hounds, but also several men on horseback, broke from cover and came galloping hotly towards them.

With hoarse shouts the men greeted the sight of Roger, as he strove, apparently, to drag his helpless girl companion farther away towards the depths of the forest.

III

TO RIGHT A WRONG

WITH a curse and a cry of satisfaction, two of the horsemen threw themselves from their saddles and, running to Roger, seized him violently. One of them swore again fiercely, and struck the boy a blow that dazed him. The other, heedless of her cries, dragged the frightened Genevra away to give her in charge of a youth who rode with the party, while her boy companion of a moment before was knocked down, pinioned to the earth, and bound with his hands behind his back.

"There's another—the dogs have got another," said one of the men, who heard, from afar, the note where the hounds were baying. "Two of you rush him to Jackson's. Hank, let her go by herself. Sissy, you're safe to go home. George, Bill, come on, for the dogs!"

The whole proceeding had occupied less than two minutes. Genevra heard the hounds again at their terrible work. She saw Roger rudely lifted to his feet and dragged away. Only when she found herself presently left there alone, frightened, dumfounded, did she comprehend that the leader of the horsemen had meant herself when he said she was safe to go home.

Roger, who had been too amazed and roughly handled to find his voice, was now so choked that he could no more than breathe. The man who held him by the coat at the back of his neck was so angered that nothing but curses arose to his tongue. He and his fellow-horseman were not a pair of ruffians; they were men of the town, a mile away. Now, however, with their faces flushed with the wrath that was in them, they were, in appearance, very fiends of vengeance.

As they hustled their captive angrily towards the town the baying of the hounds came abruptly nearer. The cries of the horsemen who had ridden away could be heard distinctly. As if in answer, a chorus of shouts, farther off in the other direction, announced the approach of another party of angered citizens.

Then it seemed as if the woods were peopled with men. A scream, where the dogs were sounding their dreadful exultation, pierced through the air suggestively.

"Got him! Bit him!" said one of the men with Roger.

A moment later they issued from the edge of the growth of saplings. Two spectacles were noted almost simultaneously. One was that of a mob of frenzied men, strung out as they came, running madly towards the trees. They were armed with guns, almost



to a man. They were bawling hoarsely. The other scene comprised only three great hounds pouncing upon and bearing to earth a negro man, who fought them and ran, for the moment that passed before his pursuers dashed from the woods, rode him down, and plunged from their horses to secure him.

The mob which had come from the town beheld with savage satisfaction the capture of the negro and the sight of the group with Roger. The foremost of these agitated citizens ran up to the captors who were marching with the boy, and yelled thus to see him.

"Got two?" cried one, who carried a rifle. "Poor Mary's dead,—never recovered."

He hastened on towards the horsemen. The mob behind him came streaming swiftly on his track. Nearly every man shouted, to express either his hatred and fierce thirst for violence, or to make a frenzied repetition of the news that some victim of violence was dead. Roger and his captors were swept along with the tide of brutalized beings towards the group where the negro had now been captured and bound.

The ominous buzzing when the mob had surged hotly into one compact mass about the two fellow-beings thus dragged to their midst was terrible.

"Mary's dead! Mary's dead!" leaped from lip to lip.

"String him up! Riddle him!" cried a blacksmith

in the throng. He had only so yelled a second in advance of a score, who demanded the same summary "justice."

One madman fired his pistol point-blank at the negro captive. The bullet plowed along the terrified being's cheek. The sight of blood roused the animal in every man.

Without so much as a question, to symbolize a trial, the doomed black man was dragged to the nearest tree. The rope was about his neck and he was strangled almost to falling before the natural gallows was gained.

Something dark shot upward above the heads of the yelling men. A fusilade of shots rang out sharply. Then five, seven, desultory reports from shot-guns, revolvers, and rifles seemed to express the dying away of the greatest heat of the madness. But men still cursed and shouted.

"Up with the other!" yelled a voice, and Roger saw a wild-eyed being lurching towards him. "Jerk him up! Damn all the niggers!"

"Wait! It wasn't him," cried another, sickened by what they had done. "There wasn't but one, and we've paid the bill for Mary."

"This one we caught in the woods, dragging a little girl away," answered one of the captors, whose thirst for violent deeds had only been whetted. "By

God, he's a nigger! He's like all the rest. We caught him in the nick of time."

"Up with him! Up with him! Do the job up clean!"

"Give us some more of that rope!"

"Wait a minute, boys; it's young Gordon!" cried a man, who alone of all that mad horde seemed to know the frightened boy.

"Let me at him," said a hoarse-voiced ruffian. He shouldered his way to Roger and flung a stiff, new rope, crudely looped, over their youthful captive's head. The mad impulse to slay could not be stayed by argument nor reason. The smell and the sight of blood wrought upon everything animal and ferocious in the mob.

With a buzzing of approval that arose to fever heat again, Roger was being dragged through the pack of men to the gallows-tree, when another disturbance, on the outside edge of the cluster of beings, divided the crowd's attention.

"Here! Wait!" bawled a voice. "Here's the gal herself!"

The ranks were opened. Through the press of men Genevra came, impulsively pushing her way and thrusting aside all who opposed her. The captors who held Roger sternly by the shoulders suddenly found themselves confronted by a flushed, excited girl,

scarcely more than a child, who, with blazing eyes and open mouth, came hotly upon them and angrily pushed their hands off from their captive.

"Let him go!" she cried. "Leave off directly, and let him go!"

"Go on, you bloomin' little Britisher," snarled back the ruffian with the rope. "What business you got with the nigger?"

"He's not a negro! He's an Indian!" she almost screamed. "He was good to me. He saved me from a horrid snake. He's done nothing to you. You leave off, I say, directly!"

"Who is she? What's the racket?" went from one to another.

"She's a friend of the kid."

"She's the one they found in the woods, and him with her."

"She says he's an Injun."

"He ain't got no wool."

"He ain't so black."

"He's only a kid."

"By God, we've done hangin' enough for one afternoon!"

"Let him go. He ain't done no harm, I reckon," shouted one of the men, in a gruff command.

"Yes, let him go," said a number of the better class, who began to dread the work already performed.

THE INEVITABLE

"You've got to let him go!" cried Genevra, angrily dashing the tears from her eyes and pushing the half-ashamed men away from the silent Roger. "He's not a negro. He's as good as he can be."

Roger was looking at her, stoutly laboring to hold back his feelings. His eyes filled; his lip trembled. He could not have spoken for the lump in his throat and the surge of emotions within him.

Genevra was claiming him undauntedly, when again the mob, crowding closely in and now demanding Roger's release, was parted as before. This time they admitted to the centre a shaggy-haired, squint-eyed man, who was obviously a gentleman of the older school. He made way for himself and a very much frightened woman.

"Roger, Roger," said the man, gently, "what's the meaning of this?"

"Oh, you naughty girl, you artful child!" cried the woman beside him, the moment she saw Genevra. "Whatever will your father say for this?"

In the stress of the moment neither Roger nor Genevra could speak.

"You'd better take these youngsters home," said one of the men who had led the mob.

Crying, protesting, looking vainly backward, Genevra was led from the place by her governess, whom sights and events had rendered grim.

TO RIGHT A WRONG

When Roger and the shaggy-haired old gentleman had gone, the shadows of waning day were stretching eastward from the trees. The crowd vanished. There was no man left in all that throng, so fevered but an hour before, who cared to see the red sunset behind that tree with its burden.

Then, when darkness had gathered, and truth could venture forth and somewhat hide her shame, the knowledge spread that the mob had caught and killed an innocent man.

IV

AN INQUISITION

ROGER was led away to a road that skirted the woods. Here stood a dilapidated horse and a more dilapidated cart, into the very composition of both of which the dust had apparently entered for years. Neither man nor boy had spoken during their walk. Roger got in and sat down on the dusty cushion. The man untied the horse and mounted to a seat beside his charge.

He saw that Roger was pale, that his eyes were downcast, that his lip trembled. He had never known Roger to be afraid, not even of death; he did not believe the boy was pale and unstrung from fear even now.

"Get along, Jim," he said to the horse, and then in a moment he asked, "How did it happen?"

Roger made no answer. His body heaved with the sobs which he could no longer repress, but which did not force themselves from his heart in audible expression. He dashed hot tears from his face time after time, but they could not be allayed. His agitation seemed the more tremendous because he sobbed so silently. Well as his older companion knew this passionate grief to which the boy at rare intervals suc-

cumbed, he had never known emotion so to possess him nor to develop to such violence before. He asked no more questions. He knew why Roger was crying.

"They—called me a nigger!" said the boy at last, brokenly. Such utter humiliation as his voice conveyed was painful to hear. The sobs which shook him increased anew. He bit his lip; he hid his face in his sleeve.

The man said nothing. He had learned that Roger was summarily dragged from the woods, where the men had found him in company with Genevra, and, knowing also the story of some negro's assault on a half-witted girl, called "Simple Mary," he understood so much that further questioning would have been superfluous. Therefore he addressed the horse only, and by dint of much gentle persuasion urged the animal over the mile of road that lay between them and home.

Roger made no further statement of the frenzied affair in which he had figured so saliently. He calmed himself by making such an effort that his elderly friend felt himself yearning over the boy with all his heart. By the time they came to the tumble-down shed which housed the horse, Roger had so far mastered his agitation as to be apparently calm. He assisted in the task of unharnessing "Jim," but a stolid silence had then settled upon him out of which, as the man was

aware, he would not soon emerge. Moreover, he knew, from past experience, that Roger would wish to sit by himself, up in the attic, during this time, before he could again be induced to speak.

As the boy went off, the man looked after him tenderly and shook his head. Such a mood as this had not come to Roger for nearly three years. On the former occasion he had been but thirteen. Now that he was older, he would not be satisfied so readily with indefinite answers. How much he would presently require his guardian to tell him of the little that he absolutely knew, the man could hardly conjecture.

He was still undecided, sitting alone at the dinner-table, where he was eating nothing, as he waited patiently for Roger to come, when the boy at last appeared.

"Just in time for dinner, lad," said the man, in the kind, indulgent voice which Roger knew so well. "Sit down, sit down."

Roger drew his chair to the table. But he pushed his plate away and laid his shapely brown hand on the cloth.

"Doctor Pingle," he said, calmly, "who was my mother?"

Doctor Pingle put down his knife and fork, took his spectacles from his pocket, rubbed them smartly, and then, adjusting them with precision, looked at

Roger over the tops of the rims. He was enormously relieved to have Roger ask of his mother. He had always heretofore pressed for information concerning his father.

"Your mother was one of the most beautiful women I ever knew," said the man. "She was rather small, but she was dainty and lively and—very beautiful to look at."

"Was her hair light yellow?"

"Why, yes, golden,—to be sure it was. But I don't see how you knew it."

"Did she laugh a good deal, and show her pretty teeth?" Roger's inquiries sounded coldly judicial.

"Well, yes, she was very pleasant," admitted the doctor.

"Then she was the woman who came to see us in San Francisco, before we moved."

"But, my dear lad, you couldn't remember San Francisco. We came to Missouri when you were only a child."

"I remember the pretty woman. She laughed a kind of way without any laugh inside," Roger said, reflectively. "She had a little girl with her, and she was very fair."

Doctor Pingle took off his glasses, rubbed them with his handkerchief, donned them again, and looked at the boy as before, over the tops of the lenses.

"Of course, of course," confessed the man; "she did have a nice little girl along."

Roger looked at him searchingly and said, "Was that little girl my sister?"

"Why—I believe she was. She must have been. By all means she was your sister."

"Not my half-sister?"

"Your half-sister?" The doctor paused and laid aside his glasses, as he always did to think. "Well, now, I don't know. Upon my word, I never asked. I couldn't say. It might be so."

"I feel sure of it," Roger told him, with deliberation. "She was so pretty, and white. I have decided that my mother must have been divorced from my father—or maybe he died and she got married to somebody else, and so she didn't want me—ever—unless she came that time in San Francisco to get me away from you. Did she come for that?"

He asked this last question eagerly. It was a possibility on which he had never happened before, in all his wondering as to his parenthood. Doctor Pingle noted the boyish yearning for mother-love which had burned up so quickly in the brown, half-melancholy eyes. He rubbed his glasses hard, to gain a moment of time.

"Well," he said, smiling gently," she didn't get you, Roger. You didn't wish to leave me at the time,

little chap as you were. You don't regret that you stayed with me?"

"Then she didn't want me bad enough to fight to get me?" The boy's disappointment was not so very great. He had too much else on his mind.

"She saw that she ought to be satisfied with your sister," said the man.

"If she was only my half-sister," the boy went on, "my own father might have been—I want to know if he was dark,—as dark as I am?"

"Dark? Why, no. You're not very dark—only what they call a deep olive."

"Then he was not—negro?" The boy was evidently excited to the last degree. The look from his eyes searched the man's face most intently.

"Why, certainly not," said the doctor. "There, there, eat your dinner, like a good sensible lad, and don't be bothering your head with all this morbid worry."

"Was he an Indian—I mean part Indian, or anything like that?"

There was no escaping from this inquisition. Roger was inexorable.

"Indian? Why, perhaps he was—partly. I never asked him, but his grandfather, or his great-grandfather, might very well have married the daughter of a chief of some of those tribes of the Eastern States."

"Oh, I am glad of that!" said the boy, passionately. "I don't see why you never told me that before. But there must be more about me—there must be a great deal I ought to know. There are secrets about me. I knew it must be Indian in me! I knew I wasn't—anything else! I want you to tell me all about my father—and mother."

"Lad, lad, eat your dinner," urged Doctor Pingle. "We'll have some music when you've finished, and forget all this unpleasant business."

"But I want to know about myself and my father. You told me once that some day I should know all about everything."

"So you shall, some day, Roger. Let it go at that. I believe provision was made to inform you of all you could wish to know; indeed, such provision was made, but the matter was to rest till you should arrive at your twenty-fourth year. There, now, I've told you more than I had any business to tell, so let it go at that and be patient—and happy. Do!"

"I am sixteen now," said Roger, insistently. "If you had been through—everything to-day, you would feel fifty years old."

"Yes, I dare say I should."

"Well, then, I'm old enough. I want to know everything."

"The few notes I've got are not at hand," said the

doctor, somewhat helplessly. He had heretofore encountered only indications of this masterful mood which Roger was developing.

"I could get them. Where are they?" Roger replied.

"They are over to—my lawyer has them, locked in my box."

"Mr. Bixby? I'll go over and tell him you want the box. I can bring it home in half an hour."

"Oh, don't go bothering about the thing to-night. Come, come, let's have a little music, and think no more about anything painful. I think I shall have to manage to get you a 'cello. I think I can manage."

Roger had risen from the table to go back to the rack for his hat. "I couldn't play to-night," he said. "I couldn't. I would rather not try. Please let me go for the box."

The mention of the coveted violincello having failed to hold him, the doctor knew that further persuasion would be wasted.

"Don't be gone long," he said. "I'm sorry you can't wait till to-morrow. The moon will be up by the time you are coming home."

Roger halted by the door for a second. "I wish you had been my father," he said, and he went out and started briskly across the near-lying fields.

V

IN THE SHADOWS

THE moon was well up and laying her plating of beauty and softened light upon woods, meadows, and villages by the time the boy was heading homeward. Of the two small towns, one of which had sprung into being a mile from its sister, when the railroad spanned the country, the one where lawyer Bixby resided was the larger. It had grown around the spot where a spring had made a water-tank convenient for the railroad. Therefore it was quite in back of the woods from the village to which Doctor Pingle had remained loyally attached.

The road from one to the other of the towns skirted the woods. Roger had come by the road, after clearing the field that stretched from the doctor's house towards the trees. Now, however, since the moon was up, he was trudging home by one of the numerous paths through the forest which pedestrians had made in seeking a straighter route between the villages.

Beneath his arm he held a square tin box, provided with a padlock so large that it might almost have held the contents of the box itself. This ingenious piece of mechanism was the weightiest thing about his burden.

The tin receptacle evidently harbored but a meagre hoard of documents. Roger could shake them about inside. To him they were ponderous enough, for heaven only knew what weight of things fateful their contents might reveal. In the core of his soul the boy still felt the torturing flames of anger and utter humiliation which must burn, it seemed to him, for a time indefinite.

Even as he walked he lived again and again those terrible moments when the rope began its constriction on his neck and fellow-beings bawled their demands for his life. Hot, galling tears of shame and anger arose to his eyes till he stumbled blindly where he walked.

He took little notice, save in a general way, of the path he was following. Of the cool sweetness of the forest and the ineffable beauty of the night he felt, for once, no consciousness. It had amazed Doctor Pingle to see to what depths the boy's agitation had extended, and yet the man had not begun to sound the feelings which Roger was undergoing.

Changing his course, the sooner to emerge from the shadows of the trees, which depressed him immeasurably, the boy had come almost to the clearing when he was suddenly halted by the sound of some one crying. Having paid no particular attention to the course he was following, Roger did not realize exactly where

he was. Such sobbing as came to his ears, from somewhere near by, he had not heard till now. It was grief that choked the half-audible sound—grief which had obviously been protracted, without remission. There was also in its tone such expression of terror as one might not hear and avoid a feeling of awe.

Without hesitation, when he had ascertained the direction whence the sounds proceeded, Roger glided through the shadows that lay between himself and the open space beyond. He emerged from the trees into the moonlight and halted.

While a feeling of dread crept up through his hair, he stood there gazing at the gallows-tree of the afternoon, with its dark burden swinging from a limb. Then as the sobbing sounded more distinctly, he looked down at the feet of that grim object, and beheld a child, a little mulatto girl, sitting on the ground beneath that form, clasping the two cold feet in her arms and weeping as he had never known that any one could weep.

He stood there regarding the scene uncertainly. It was dreadful to hear that sobbing; it was more dreadful to think what that lifeless form had been to this child. He dreaded the thought of approaching the thing, after his own appalling experience earlier in the day. To leave the spot at once was the impulse that came most strongly upon him. Having come in

silence, he started in silence to get away, back to the shadows of the trees.

But he could not so depart. What he had suffered from his humiliation sank into insignificance beside the anguish of this lonely child. His sense of compassion bound him where he was. His own troubles disappeared before those of the girl, whose object of affection was so terrible.

Stepping out in the moonlight, he went slowly forward. He knew when the child discovered his presence, for the catch in her crying and the note of alarm were unmistakable.

"Don't cry," he said, coaxingly. "Don't cry. I'm very sorry." He went up quite close to where the little mulatto girl was cringing in affright on the ground.

She could not repress the sobbing which had become somewhat hysterical. The sounds that she made were distressing, as she stared up at the half-lighted face of her visitor and caught at her crying spasmodically.

"I wouldn't stay—here," said Roger, in his sympathy. "I'm very sorry, but I wouldn't stay and cry. I'll go home with you now, if you want me to."

The child before him could make no answer. She still clung to that dark object and looked at Roger and sobbed.

"Don't you want to go home?" said the boy, gently.

She nodded the answer which she could not speak.

"All right," Roger added, "I'll take you home. Don't you want to go now?"

"There ain't—nobody—there," said the child, speaking brokenly and with much difficulty.

She had lifted her face so that the moonlight fell upon it. Roger knew then who she was. It was little Teresa Berry, whose parents, both mulattoes, had for long enjoyed the respect of Doctor Pingle and several other residents of the village, who had frequently given employment both to Clem and to Clara, his wife. Clara Berry had died a little less than a month before. Roger, therefore, understood Teresa thoroughly when she said there was no one at home.

"Then you had better come home with me," he said, after a moment of reflection. "Do you want to do that?"

Teresa was still shaken with sobs. She nodded as before, but made no movement to leave the place where she was sitting.

"I meant now, Teresa," the boy added. "I wouldn't stay here any more." He held out his hand to assist her to rise.

Teresa partially arose to her knees and put out her hand, till Roger took it. Then she flung her other arm about that grim form again and leaned against it, burying her face and weeping anew heart-brokenly.

"Oh—my—honey—papa! she sobbed. "My—papa! my papa!"

Roger waited in patience. The soft hand in his clung to him desperately. "I'm awful sorry. Come on home, Teresa," he said.

When she stood up at last her face was hidden in her arm, as she cried afresh, more quietly, more in the grief of affliction and bereavement.

The boy said nothing, as he led her gently away. They walked but slowly, for Teresa stumbled often, still bowing her head in her bended arm, and striving to master her sobbing. What between a sense of shame she felt, thus to be leaving her father alone in the shadows, and the weakness occasioned by the touch of sympathy, the child could neither speak nor lift her eyes.

"Don't cry any more, Teresa," said Roger at last. "We are almost home."

Teresa raised her head as bravely as she could, but she made no attempt to answer.

Thus they came together to the entrance of Doctor Pingle's house. He had heard the sound of footsteps on his walk. Before Roger could knock, the man opened the door and looked out upon them in wonder.

"To-day that was Teresa's father," said the boy. "I have brought her home."

VI

ADJUSTING TERESA

CONCERNING the freightage of information which the papers in the iron box contained Roger still remained in ignorance, even after several days had passed, with the papers in the house. This was not entirely due to the natural distraction which the advent of Teresa had occasioned. Roger was not of a nature to be distracted from an object for long. But Doctor Pingle, having once more fingered the envelopes which the box had held till now, and having read upon them that they were only to be opened and read by Roger Gordon himself, when his twenty-fourth birthday should arrive, had refused to break his trust. Therefore the box was again adorned with its cumbersome padlock, and the doctor's lips were resolutely sealed.

Roger himself soon realized that Doctor Pingle was sufficiently employed with the problem of what to do with Teresa. Her father's body had been interred at the expense of the county, but the doctor had not been convinced that any care of the child which it might be possible to exact from the State would prove a comfort to the somewhat lorn little figure.

She clung to Roger with all the affection and yearning of her nature. That her feelings should thus have

been transferred to the boy was natural. Her love developed swiftly, to something more than a filial or even a sisterly regard. He had come to her in gentleness and with courage, at her hour of bitterest shame and bereavement. He had brothered her since.

Besides the compassion in his heart, and the courage with which the boy had been born, Roger had a sense of justice and right which were extraordinarily developed. The hideous wrong which the mob had done demanded retribution for Teresa. If this could not be secured, then there was all the more reason why he and Doctor Pingle should protect the child from further grief, and afford her what compensation they could, as friends and guardians.

That the boy could reciprocate the feeling which had leaped into Teresa's heart towards him was impossible. He was not even aware of the childish adoration in which Teresa held him. His thoughts fled back to that sweet, impulsive little companion of the brook, who had gone with him hand in hand to where he played his 'cello; who had saved his life, at a moment most terrible; who had called upon his name as her governess dragged her away. He thought of his music—the music that flowed through his soul—day and night, demanding expression, ready to leap into audible sound, if only he could find Genevra again.

How often soever he returned to the brook, where he had found her first, he could find her no more. And when, on these occasions, he went to the clearing in the greenwood, where was his tree-'cello, he stood silent before it, without the heart to play, and looked at it yearningly, as if to conjure Genevra back to the scene. He had played it first for Genevra; he would never play it again till she should stand there beside him to listen.

In the mean time Doctor Pingle was somewhat concerned as to what was now to be done with Teresa. To keep her there beneath his roof indefinitely was out of the question. To place her in any of the State institutions he had early decided he would not attempt to do. He began to regret that his practice of medicine had fallen into such entire neglect. His boyish love for music, choked back, with all the flighty ambitions of youth, at the instance of his parents, had come creeping slyly upon him, in the man's more peaceful years. He had courted it almost in secret, in that spirit of concealment bequeathed him from his youth. Though his practice had dwindled and been permitted to slip him by, it had formerly earned him enough to keep him from want for the rest of his days. There was still a guilty feeling upon him, nevertheless, as if his parents were always about to reprove him for spending his time with idle music.

He told himself now that had he kept up his practice he would know of some one to whom he could take the parentless child, with a confidence that she would always be thoughtfully treated.

Harking back upon the days when he was a doctor in performance as well as in name, he at length remembered another mulatto couple, whose baby-girl, had it lived, would have been but a few months older than Teresa. Therefore when he came trudging home, one day, from a pilgrimage across the country to the railroad village, he met Teresa at his own little gate with the tidings that he had found her a happy, comfortable home, where a good woman was longing to expend her pent-up mother-love on a child she could have for her own.

Teresa listened silently. She was a pretty little thing. There was red beneath the tint of her chocolate cheeks; her face was round and smooth; her eyes were frank and trusting; her features were rather pleasing. Now, as she learned she must not expect to remain here in this haven, where Roger could be seen and talked with every day, an expression of sadness came upon her face, and the light of joy burned out in her eyes.

She said nothing, however. The little thing had a sense of dignity. She had not revealed her feeling for Roger; she accepted the doctor's decision.

"When mus' I go?" she asked.

"I told Mrs. Jackson you could come to-night," said Doctor Pingle. "But perhaps you had better have your dinner first, with us, and Roger can take you over then before it's very dark."

The dinner did not, however, come to an end till the darkness of night had settled on the country.

"Give me your hand, Teresa," said Roger, when they started. "We'll cut off a little, across the fields, and then we can take the road."

All unconscious of the fact that his fingers were tingling Teresa's till they burned, and were to burn for days, he led her to her newer home and quietly bade her good-by.

VII

A CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

AWARE, from the doctor's abstraction, that something important was weighing on his guardian's mind, Roger spent two or three days in wondering what he should prepare himself to expect. He thought at first Doctor Pingle's long spell of meditation might mean the 'cello, which had been nearly as good as promised. He soon made up his mind, however, that a cogitation extending over a day indicated something of far greater moment than merely the purchase of an instrument. In this he was right.

"Roger," said the man, when at length he had come to his own conclusions, "have you thought at all about what you wish to be in the years to come,—what line or profession you desire to follow?"

"Do you want me to be a doctor?" said the boy.

"Well, I don't know. I don't wish you to be anything against your own inclination. I wish to know what you yourself prefer."

"Could I make any money—I mean a decent living —out of music?"

"That's the point," the doctor replied, rubbing his glasses, squinting his eyes as he did so, and then regarding his youthful companion soberly, over the

tops of the lenses. "I must try so to equip you that you can make even a little more than a living. And yet—if you love the music as I did at about your age—— Well, is music what you positively want? Are you willing to work hard, and perhaps suffer, and undergo discouragement, for the sake of attaining something at the last?"

"I would do almost anything, and work day and night, if you told me I could expect to succeed some day—if it wouldn't be a silly thing to try to make a living out of when the studying was over," said the boy, earnestly. "Do you think I have got enough talent?"

"More than half the talent in the world is simply steadfast purpose, Roger. I think you have some talent,—enough to encourage, if you will put yourself to the task of studying hard and working."

It was a kindly, wrinkled face he presented to the boy, as he looked across the table at the youthful countenance, so serious and handsome. Roger looked at him affectionately, frankly admiring the great shock of iron-gray hair, the deep-blue eyes, the homely, intelligent countenance. As a matter of fact, Doctor Pingle regarded Roger as a genius in music, possessing far greater possibilities than ever he himself had known, and capable of attaining an eminence of which he could some day be proud. He had never, however,

encouraged self-conceit nor over-confidence in his young companion.

"Music could make me work myself to death," said the boy, earnestly.

The doctor believed it. Indeed, his heart was set on Roger's choice of music for his manhood's career. He had simply desired this confirmation before he should counsel anything calculated to make his charge believe the road was to be easily won. All that had formerly been denied himself, yea, more than this, he had determined should fall to the lot of this tractable, lovable boy, so far as in him lay the powers of bestowal, provided always Roger positively longed for and merited the opportunities.

"Well," he said, gravely, "I have been thinking and trying to plan the next best step. It is a long time since I got you as far as my own poor knowledge goes, yet I hope your years of study with me will prove of some little value at the school."

"The school?"

"Yes, the conservatory. I think you had better go to St. Louis, Roger, right away. There is no time to waste, now that you have made up your mind."

"Oh, won't that be great!" cried the boy, joyfully.

"No, not great, lad, but it's the next good step. New York would not be wise, just yet—not till we've tried something nearer first."

"When are we going?" Roger asked him, eagerly.

"I think you can start at once, to-morrow. You might as well take advantage of the summer course. The class is not so large, but perhaps you will receive even more attention for that reason. Yes, I think you could manage to start to-morrow."

"But, aren't you going with me?"

"Oh, no. No, no. I shall stay here and keep things going. There is no one who would look after my few little houses as I want it done. That's all right. You go ahead. It isn't far. You can write often, and later on—we'll see."

Roger's enthusiasm somewhat fell. "I am sorry we aren't going together," he said.

But youth and ambition are always self-centred. Presently Roger was making his preparations, and chatting of wonderful hopes, of life in the city, and of coming home in vacations, and of working like a horse. Therefore he missed the look of yearning in the doctor's eyes, and failed to realize how all of his gladness could make more sore a heart that was hurt at the thought of this, the first parting between them.

In the morning, when he went, however, Roger was saddened and loving and thoughtful enough, and the man knew that none of his parent affections, none of his worries, none of his cares or sacrifices, had been in vain.



A CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

"God bless you, lad," he said. "Keep me proud of you always."

Then the long summer weeks began to slip away, and there, in his lonely little home, Doctor Pingle listened and listened, when he waked in the night, as so often he had done, as if to make himself sure that his boy was breathing naturally, and that all was well.

Roger's letters came regularly, long ones at first, that told much of the new life into which he had plunged. There were boyish descriptions of classmates and teachers, and outbursts of youthful impatience at the rudimentary work at which they kept him so long. Later the letters told less and less of school, acquaintances, and work. They were all about the little home he had left behind him. They were "made-up" letters, that to Doctor Pingle revealed some state of unhappiness which the boy would fain conceal.

Youth, the doctor well knew, is prone to disappointments. He told himself Roger had come at last in contact with the toil and disheartening failures that abound on the path of any serious journey towards the far-away peaks of attainment. This was a stage he had quite expected, but Roger would win through it, for the mettle was in him. Yet with all his explanations to himself he was not wholly satisfied, nor freed from haunting worry.

The second month since Roger's departure had

gone, the third was well on its way, when one evening Doctor Pingle observed a tall, dusty figure come limping along the road, carrying something which resembled the case of a violin. He squinted his eyes and looked. Then he rubbed at his glasses, put them on, and peered intently over the rims at the figure.

"Why, Roger!" he said aloud, to himself.

He arose from his seat on the porch and hastened down to the gate, in time to meet the boy as he halted there to enter.

It was Roger, indeed, but such a Roger as the doctor had never seen before. His face was wan. His weariness showed in his eyes. He was altered, for manhood had come upon him prematurely. His dark, somewhat melancholy eyes seemed deeper set in his head. Study had added to the intellectuality of his face, and cares had obliterated the softness of boyhood. He smiled as the doctor came to meet him, but it was not a bright nor a happy expression.

"I have come home," he said, as he limped into the garden.

"Boy, boy," said the doctor, brokenly, "what's the —trouble? You haven't walked?"

"Yes, I've walked. It only took two days."

"Two days!" echoed the man, as he took the limping boy by the arm and helped him up to the porch.

"Where did you sleep? Where did you get anything to eat?"

"I didn't want to sleep. I wanted to get—home," said Roger, blinking his eyes swiftly and biting his lip. "I wouldn't ask the—white people for anything to eat, and I couldn't ask the negroes."

He sat down on the edge of the porch wearily. Doctor Pingle stared at him in silence, his face twitching as he looked upon the boy. He could not speak, for the moment.

"I couldn't stand it any longer," Roger went on, almost hotly. "They called me a nigger. The students insulted me—all the time. The teachers hated to teach me—all but one. He bore with me because I played better than all the others. I did! I did! he said so. He cared more for that than he did for—my color. I tried to stand it—not to care; but shame, humiliation—every day—hurt so I couldn't. They thought of new ways to insult me all the time. I knew I would kill somebody soon. If I weren't an Indian I wouldn't care. So—I came home." He refused to cry, but the lumps were in his throat.

"Come in, Roger, come in," said Doctor Pingle, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder and gently urging him to rise. "Come in and let me get you something to eat."

"You don't know how they can torture a man by

calling him a nigger and treating him like a cur," Roger went on, resolutely. "I read of a man who had a disease that turned him black. And his wife left him, because he was hounded so for a nigger. He had to go and join the negroes—to live in peace. It's no use. I can't do it. I can't endure it. I can come home to you, but where else could I go—except to the negroes? Some day I shall have to go with them. I shall have to give up the music—and everything—and go with them, unless I die. It's Indian that's in me,—that's why it hurts."

He suddenly put up his dusty sleeve against the post of the porch, and hid his face in the folds at his elbow. He made no sound, but his body was shaken by convulsions before he could gain the mastery over weariness and his anguish.

"Come in, come in, lad, and have something to eat," the doctor repeated. "I'm glad to see you home."

Roger said nothing further. His outburst was finished. The doctor knew there was much more he could have told, but he led him thoughtfully away from the topic that plunged the boy in such utter depths of humiliation. What Roger had said already had revealed to him such possibilities of mental suffering as he had never dreamed the lad possessed.

Therefore, as the boy was finally eating, in his quiet, moderate manner, which belied his famished

condition, Doctor Pingle rubbed and rubbed at his glasses, looked at his silent companion intently, and pondered over something which had come in his thoughts as the boy's bitter sentence on himself and the final outcome of his fate was being pronounced.

"Now, then, lad, take a bath and go to bed," he said, when Roger had finished his meal. "Just pretend you never went away from home at all. In the morning we'll talk, if you wish, for there may be plans that will make us happy yet."

"I was learning—some. I can play a little better than before I went," said Roger, limping over to the case that held his violin. "I know I didn't waste my time, nor any money."

The doctor would not have had the heart to ask him to play to-night, but he saw with pleasure that Roger wanted to take the instrument in his hands.

The young fellow tucked it lovingly beneath his chin, and drew his bow across the strings with the touch of a master. He began to play. The instrument was soon expressing something of ineffable sadness, the purity of which was remarkable. It was a mood of hopeless grief that sounded from the touch of the bow. Its sweetness only made its depths of woe the more poignant.

Doctor Pingle closed his eyes. His head sank on his breast as he listened. What he heard was un-

familiar. He presently knew it was Roger's own creation; that, indeed, it told of his heart's despair and sorrow. That it came straight from a soul that yearned for achievement, that felt its own infinite power, but which was crying out in the refinement of its pain, was all too palpable. The man could not but suffer with the boy. He was all unstrung. The music so pleaded for its maker; it so convinced that he could rise to greatness. And yet it was all so sad, so patiently, hopelessly sad.

The end was never reached. Unable to go on with it, weary and affected as he was, Roger put the instrument down on the table and looked across at the man who had been father, mother, and all to him that he had ever had. The lisping of childhood arose to his lips.

"Good-night, dosser," he said, and he limped off to his room.

"Good-night, laddie, good-night," said the doctor, and, staring at the door where the boy had gone, he presently began to polish his glasses with all his might.

He sat at the table till after twelve, figuring sums on a bit of paper with his pencil.

In the morning he was brisk and filled with enthusiasm.

"Roger," he said, "in Germany nobody cares what

a man may be, so long as he knows music, or wants to know it. You would have to go there to finish off, no matter where else we had you study. We can do it—do it quite comfortably. Off you go to Leipsic, in a week."

The comfortable way in which he did it was to sell nearly all of his houses.





II

GENEVRA



I

A SOCIAL AMBITION

INASMUCH as music is the voice of gladness, God created the universe with one mighty anthem of joy.

There is warmth and breath and life itself in melody.

It was music, at Leipsic, music that knitted new gladness in his nature, music that rang in his soul, that fashioned Roger Gordon in a mould of largeness and manhood. He had spent his years of study with infinite care and with infinite pleasure. He had known a way to love his work for every new day in the calendar.

Yet genuine growth is never achieved without its pangs. Roger had suffered discouragements and seasons of doubt as poignant as travails of motherhood. Afraid at times of self-satisfaction, he had sounded the depths of an earnest man's despair. Nevertheless, professors and fellow-students had watched his growth with a pride too great for envy, and, when at length he had come to the end of conservatory days, had seen him depart with mingled hopes and regrets.

Roger was glad, however, to have finished. No man may gauge his strength until he shall try to make his way alone. Not that Roger had neglected to stand

by himself at the school. He had, as a matter of fact, completed not a little of a most ambitious composition at Leipsic, but now he rejoiced to think he had come to the end of the student's road and that henceforth he should go forward as a musical frontiersman, seeking empires untrammelled, where none but the gods themselves might go before to blaze the way.

When he left the school he had come to London. Not the greatness and opportunities of England's capital alone had served to entice him from the Continent; he still fostered memories and hopes, caught securely to his heart one sweet, tragic day, long before, in America.

At the time when he came, society had once more donned the motley. The London season was at its height. Lent had faded away, leaving naught but its own little heap of ashes, so lightly scattered by the breath of pleasure. The weather itself had shaken off the "sackcloth" fog, and, as if it revelled in its freedom again, the sun blazed as warmly as a wanton.

In such a spring a woman's fancy seriously turns to thoughts of prowess, for woman, even in the mere pursuit of pleasure, is not entirely bereft of ambitions. Of all the throng of self-coronated social queens of London, there was none more eager for distinction than the honest, generous, and clever Lady Minto-Denby, at whose house all Knightsbridge felt at home.

She stated candidly that she sought for and patronized brains. No wonder that with all the social set, thus subtly flattered, her functions were extravagantly popular. Sadly enough, with her house thus successfully filled with persons, who were often considerable personages, Lady Denby was afflicted with a sense of disappointment.

She had one absorbing passion,—to create a social lion. The legends were legion of the "cubs" she had captured, in the hope of seeing a roaring creature mature. Nevertheless, failure ruthlessly danced attendance on her efforts, and here was a bright new season racing towards its finish and not so much as a promising kitten on all her social horizon.

It was therefore with joy, not, however, uncommingled with doubt, that she welcomed Algernon Lennox as the first arriving guest on her Wednesday night. "Algy, the leo-maniac," as Lord Minto-Denby dubbed him, was still an enthusiastic hunter, despite the fact that no fewer than seven of his alleged lions, discovered and brought to the gilded cage in Knightsbridge, had proved to be but lambs in borrowed clothing.

"I say, I've got you some one at last," he said this evening, with a cheerfulness undiminished by his record. "He's a fine old chap I knew at Leipsic,—a ripping composer. He's the coming man. I say, did you ever see a black tiger?"

Lady Denby reclined unperturbed in her chair. "I believe I once saw something of the sort, at Olympia," she answered, amused at Algy's certainty. "Why do you ask?"

"Did you ever see a black lion?" her visitor interrogated, by way of replying.

"No, I don't think I ever had the pleasure."

"Then you're going to see one here to-night."

"A black lion?" she repeated. "Do you mean that your new discovery is an African? I hope not that, dear Algy."

"Certainly not," Lennox assured her, warmly. "He's an American Indian, descendant from the daughter of a chief, and all that sort of thing. He's not black, you know, but dark. He's the man, you may remember, who saved the life of a funny little chap—Fritz Bergen—fetched him back to the top when he fell and shot down on the Jungfrau snow, last summer."

"Not the man who was lowered down with a rope and was dragged up the ice with an almost ridiculous little musician in his arms?"

"Same chap."

"I could easily have lionized him last autumn on that alone," said Lady Denby, with interest.

"I think not," Lennox corrected. "He would not have permitted you to try."

"Is he, then, so diffident? He will never succeed as a lion."

"Oh, he knows his power with music. He only wants the opportunity, to prove himself a remarkable man."

"Does he also play?"

"Rather! But his forte is composition. I took the liberty of asking him to come here to-night."

"Why, thank you, Algy. I shall be delighted to see him. I only hope your estimate will prove accurate at last. Ah, here is Genevra."

The portières parted and Lennox quickly turned, as he rose from his chair, to greet a tall, superbly gowned young woman, with nugget-gold hair, slumbrous gray eyes, and shoulders and arms so white that their beauty was dazzling. She flushed slightly at the sight of Lennox, to whom she extended her hand in a frank, girlish way that denoted her pleasure.

The man, for his part, became suddenly red and a little confused. The gladness and light in his eyes, however, spoke of his joy before his lips could frame their greeting.

"Genevra, rejoice," said Lady Denby. "Algy has bagged us a some one that he hopes is his lion at last. A real, live, black social lion."

"Dear me, how sinister he sounds," said Genevra. "I hope you will introduce him properly caged."

"It seems he chafes behind bars of music," Lady Denby informed her. "But, Algy, what is his precious name?"

"Leo vulgaris, I should think," ventured Genevra, who hated social celebrities and the process by which they were developed.

"Not yet," said Lennox, loyal to the friend whose way he was paving. "He's not that sort, I assure you. His name is Herr Comanche."

"Still formidable," was Genevra's comment. "I came to tell you, Ellen, that it's time to expect your menagerie of guests."

"Let us go. I am almost excited," replied her ladyship.

Rising, she glanced for a second in the mirror over the mantel, and, patting her hair indifferently, went with her friends to receive the artificial people soon thronging through the rooms.

II

THE BLACK LION

EAGER to note what her ladyship's first impression of Herr Comanche would be, Algernon Lennox remained near at hand for an hour. Then, despite his adroitness, the Marchioness of Rowley abducted him playfully, with many a pat of her perfume-laden fan, and took him away to the ices.

Lady Denby, as a matter of fact, was much concerned lest her promised prize should fail to appear. Genevra was bored. The two were not a little weary of receiving. The crowds, the chatter, the changing pictures of faces, bare shoulders, white fronts of the gentlemen, the sparkle of gems, the parade of bedizened age, contrasted with and out-coloring youth and beauty,—all of this made the brain rebellious and fretful.

Genevra was beating her soft little palm with her fan, and wishing she dared to crack the inoffensive bauble on the bald, shining heads so numerous about her. Thus engaged she was presently aware that Ellen was tugging at her gown. She turned about, in time to catch the murmur of an introduction, and the name:

"Herr Comanche."

Her bosom was suddenly heaving; her breath came in hot, quick catches. Mad little thrills ran riot in her being. Bowing before herself and Lady Denby was a tall man with deep-set, half-sad eyes, as brown as a seal, and with a clean-cut face as dark as bronze.

She knew him instantly—Roger!

She swayed where she stood—so great was the impulse to cry out his name and to run to him, holding out her two eager hands for him to take. But his eyes, aside from a kindling of admiration excited by her beauty, betrayed no sign of recognition.

A man alters little, unless he grow a beard. A girl, full-blossomed as a rose, bears small resemblance to what she was as a bud still maidenly folded.

Genevra caught her breath and her womanly control of herself with one impulse. She held forth her hand, with at least a show of calm.

"I am pleased to meet you, Herr Comanche," she murmured.

"Herr Comanche, your fame is here before you," said Lady Denby, archly. "So often fame is a faithful dog that runs before to bark the news of his master's approach."

"I fear my fame would prove to be one of those low-bridge dogs,—those Dachshunds, that barely walk with difficulty," Roger answered.

He looked towards Genevra, from whose face his

eyes appeared unable long to swing away. She had looked at him steadfastly, longingly, and, blushing at her conduct, had glanced in another direction at last, to bend every faculty to hear his voice. She would not have believed, the moment before he came, that he or any other man could have stirred her nature to depths that had lain undisturbed since that day when fate had crossed her path and Roger's. In the crush she had now been surrounded by six or seven men, of all ages, sizes, and mental equipments.

Lady Denby had found herself swiftly charmed.

"Seriously, Herr Comanche, I hope——" she started to say, but the sentence was never completed.

Lady Burton, with Harold Donegal, her previous season's lion,—this one from the literary jungle,—made her way to the hostess and introduced her *protégé*. They claimed Lady Denby's attention for a moment, at the time that Lennox came back upon the scene with three fair ladies, two of whom desired to be presented to his friend.

"I say, old chap," he said to Roger, "you're deucedly late in coming. Allow me the pleasure of presenting you to the Honorable Miss Melgand, Herr Comanche, and Miss Effingham. You know Lady Fitzhenry already." And he indicated the tallest and most beautiful woman of the trio.

Roger had, indeed, met Lady Fitzhenry on the Con-

tinent, and on several recent occasions in London. She appeared to feel, in fact, the comradeship of an old-time friend.

"I hope you are going to sing something. We have heard so much about you," said Miss Effingham, laughing perfunctorily. "Singing is so sweet."

"Such a crush to-night! isn't it quite a bore?" said the Honorable Miss Melgand.

Lady Fitzhenry looked at Roger with ready compassion. "Herr Comanche, I know the heat must have made you thirsty," she said, with ingenuous charm. "Won't you take me to get an ice?"

"With pleasure," said Comanche.

Lady Fitzhenry—a Brunhild in beauty and splendid physique—passed her hand beneath his arm and skilfully guided him clear of further entanglements.

And yet, as they went, Genevra heard the lady's most caressful tones: "Dear sir, it is strange how happy I dare to be—with you. But beware of bringing too many besides me to your feet."

What the answer was Genevra could not hear.

"Shall I also beware of bringing myself to the feet of too many?" said Roger, who had always found himself amused by this unconventional young widow. "I give you my word, I have more hearts than senses. There is one heart here in my eye, which beats when I look upon beauty. Here in my ear is another, that

leaps at the sound of an exquisite voice. A third in my brain responds to cleverness. Pray what is a man to do?"

"Have another in your pocket-book," advised the lady. "Be sure you feel it throbbing at the clink of gold, before you quite give way to the silly flutterings of sentiment."

"I shall certainly get a heart responsive to wit," he assured her, gayly.

"Get me an ice, please, first," she suggested.

Vaguely stirred as to some indefinable emotion, Genevra watched where Lady Fitzhenry led Gordon away. To herself she repeated the bright young widow's words, and felt a flush rising to her face. It could hardly be possible that even a premonition of jealousy was coming thus promptly upon her. But what did it mean, that speech of her ladyship's? Was Roger pleased? He was smiling; he was chatting with her gayly.

Genevra's first impulse had been one of pure girlishness. She had felt herself starving to run to Roger and give him both her hands, to speak his name, to tell him in one of love's own impulses not only who she was, but also of all the gladness suddenly come upon her thus to find him once again. She fettered her nature, however, and strove to crush the insidious fore-presence of suspicion she felt creeping in her

bosom against Lady Fitzhenry. To the men about her she turned a face all smiles, but the soul had stolen forth from her eyes to rove on the errand of wilful love.

"Such beautiful weather we're having," said one of the men.

"So I believe," answered Genevra, vacantly.

"Beautiful weather for golf," said a fiercely whiskered lord.

Roger and his fair companion had disappeared in the farther room. Despite herself, Genevra burned with impatience. To her great relief she presently saw that Lennox was making his way towards her through the groups of visitors. Excusing herself from her numerous attendants, she advanced towards Algy, whose pleasure at this bit of kindness was plainly reflected on his face.

"Were you coming for me?" she said. "I should like an ice very much."

"I was hoping you might be thirsty," confessed Lennox. "How do you like him?—or don't you know, as yet?"

Her cheeks became suffused with color. She glanced away.

"Like whom?" she asked, faintly.

He had noted the blush, but her answer disarmed him, watchful as he was of her every mood.

"I mean Herr Comanche. Women like him almost invariably."

"Where did you meet him first?" she inquired.

"At the Leipsic conservatory," said Lennox. "The hopes of the school are centred in his future. In composition they have had no such man for years. We were all of us jealous and envious of him at first, but he made us like him, respect him, and hope for his fame, before he went."

She replied, with assumed indifference, "You seem to like him a great deal."

"Ah, you have never heard him draw a bow."

"On what instrument does he play?" she ventured to ask. "Has he a favorite instrument?"

"Oh, he plays on anything,—violin, piano, 'cello,—and never the same thing twice—always something composed on the spur of the moment. He doesn't pretend to play, but he can make a 'cello live."

Her heart was beating its wings in her breast.

"There he is now—with Lady Fitzhenry," she murmured.

The sudden agitation of her bosom, the leap of color to her cheeks, the rapid fanning of her breath, were not altogether lost on Lennox. He chided himself, however, for his ever too ready conclusions. He found himself absurd. She had known Comanche less than fifteen minutes. The heat of the rooms had

brought the red to her face. She was not even looking at Comanche now.

Lennox glanced again where Roger was sitting. A high-browed poet was foisting himself upon Lady Fitzhenry's attentions, even as she chatted with Gordon.

"They met on the Continent," Algy imparted. "She likes him—she always has, and says so frankly. They make a handsome couple, don't they? She threatened once that she would marry him yet."

"Marry—whom?" Genevra asked him, faintly.

"Comanche, of course. That rhymster there is a silly ass."

"Please get me an ice," his companion answered, with apparent unconcern. As a matter of fact, she felt she could not for a moment longer endure Algy's gaze, while her heart was beating so wildly and her nature was all so rebellious, so bearing her whither it listed.

Half angered at her wholly ungovernable emotions, joyous, nevertheless, in all her being, thus to see him in his splendid manhood, she hardly dared to look where Roger sat, when Lennox had left her standing by the door of the palm-cove alone.

She felt that all her secret was advertised upon her cheeks, her lips, her very bosom. The light was unendurable. Slipping swiftly out of sight, in the

tiny cove of palms, she sat upon a bench and pressed her hands upon her breast with all her strength.

From her hidden seat she could see not only Lady Fitzhenry, in all her bold, compelling beauty, but Roger as well,—and without herself being seen. Therefore she gave herself over to the luxury of a long, satisfying look. So intent was her gaze, indeed, that it seemed as if she must have drawn Gordon's answering glance. He turned his eyes upon her bower as if to penetrate the foliage. She sank back, abashed, blushing, catching her breath in a tiny gasp of confusion.

Roger had seen her, in truth, as she glided behind the palms. His gaze was baffled now, however, by the shadows in which she was sitting. Indeed, so completely was she hidden that Lennox, returning with the ices, failed absolutely to discover where she was. As he looked the company over he found himself abruptly made a captive once again by the Marchioness of Rowley.

"Ah, you tempter," she laughed at him, engagingly. "You knew of my weakness for ices. So good of you, really. Come and talk to me here in the corner."

She took his arm and piloted man and ices to the corner in question, where she held him prisoner with many pretty pranks of antiquity.

III

A THEME FOR A COMPOSITION

THERE were not a few gentlemen at this evening party who felt that they could worship at the shrine of mammon and beauty in one transaction by idolizing Lady Fitzhenry. At the advent of a group of these worshippers Gordon managed to stroll away.

With apparent unconcern he approached the green retreat where Genevra was seated. Obviously by accident, when he halted to examine the foliage, he suddenly discovered Miss Harberton, whose dilated eyes were turned upon him in all their glory.

"What a calm retreat," he said. "May I not come in?"

"If you—wish," answered Genevra.

She moved along on her bench as he stepped in beside her. A faintness crept in her veins, so excitedly fluttered her heart.

"This is almost a little handful of forest," he said, as he took his place upon the bench. Then he added, frankly, "I dared to hope I should see you again this evening."

Genevra had no impulses ready now with promptings. She was happy, ecstatically happy, thus to have him at her side, but by the very force of the love

which could make her so swiftly forget Lady Fitzhenry, she was overwhelmed to find him so near.

"Oh, you are very kind to say so," she murmured.

He looked at her fairly. Their eyes met for a second. Confused, they both looked down. Roger, however, was instantly gazing on her face, he hardly knew why. He thought he had never beheld a woman so entirely beautiful. Yet beauty had not so enthralled him before. In the stress of some wonderful awakening, he failed to analyze the meaning of all that was happening.

Long as he had hoped that by chance he might one day discover the little Genevra of his happiest dreams, he failed to know her now, when at last her presence was stirring once more all those chords of love and music in his soul. A thousand times he had asked himself why should not the spirit of constancy guide him yet to the side of Genevra. But inconsistently the man was looking for a graceful child, with a sun-burned, slightly freckled face, eyes fond and fearless, and a maidenly witchery of impulsiveness which would bring her running to greet him. To-night, however, despite the years and all, this beautiful girl beside him, with her lips so red, eyes so honest, with hair so richly golden, and with arms and shoulders so white and softly rounded,—this girl made him at last forgetful of the vision of Genevra, so treasured in his mind.

"It seems to me I must have met you somewhere before," he said to her after a moment. "May we not have met at Lady Fitzhenry's?"

Excitement rose swiftly in her bosom, but the name of Lady Fitzhenry somewhat chilled it all.

"I hardly think it likely," she answered.

Why did he not know, by the prompting of his heart, where it was they had met? She added,—

"Have you been in England long?"

"Several weeks," he told her. Again he said, "I am almost positive we have met—somewhere." Her heart rocked like a tiny boat as he looked in her eyes. But he added, "Never mind. I only know I feel that we are quite acquainted. Tell me, do you think a youthful impression could be so sound, so substantial, that a person when grown would confirm it?"

"I don't feel sure that I understand your question," she replied. Yet some intuition of her heart had darted swiftly to a partial comprehension of what he was thinking.

Roger was himself amazed that he should ever arrive at his present state of mind. A fear had come upon him suddenly, in the presence of Genevra, that his judgment of to-day might not sustain his boyhood opinions in any degree whatsoever.

"I mean," he explained, "to ask for your opinion on a question that perhaps I could illustrate thus: Just

suppose that a young fellow met a little companion when both were scarcely more than children. Suppose that he liked this comrade intensely, and then they were parted. For years he entertains the fondest dreams of that childhood meeting. He becomes a man, and still cleaves to his dreams. The question now is, Would his estimate of to-day sustain that intense liking of the past, or would he be wiser not to put those youthful impressions to the test?"

He had never confronted himself with this problem before. He had never wished for anything but the realization of that boyhood dream of Genevra. He marvelled at the witchery of this girl who could bring such a question to his lips. He felt himself a traitor, yet recklessly happy and thrilling with a madness of heart and brain that he dared not name.

Genevra knew what he meant. She feared he must hear the wild beating of her heart. But she looked away and answered,—

"If you had ever had such a dream, Herr Comanche, would you fear to test your—your constancy?"

"I might," he confessed. "A dream may be so much sweeter than waking. A dream may be too precious to shatter. On the other hand, it is only a dream—perhaps a delusion. We make fools of ourselves so readily, all through life."

A cruel comprehension that he loved Lady Fitzhenry, while still he cherished a little of the memory of their childhood meeting, and so feared to meet herself, lest he find her changed, crept remorselessly to Genevra's heart.

She said, "You mean that a man—or a woman—would be a fool to remain constant to a fancy of childhood,—a fancy of liking some one met in childhood?"

She was pale. In the shadows this escaped his notice.

"It might be so, and it might not," was his answer. "It would all so much depend upon——"

"On what he found her to be—afterwards."

"Or what she found him to be, equally as much."

"If one is afraid——" she started to say, but he interrupted.

"Not afraid, not so much that. If any one had a beautiful thing, as fragile as a bubble, which was safe in the dark, and which might instantly break in the full light of day, would he not keep it jealously away from all the light? I only asked you if a test would be wise?"

"If a man so worshipped a thing in the dark," she said, with suppressed emotion, "if he feared to face the light of day with his judgment of its worth, by all means he would do well to hold to his fancy,—making a fool of himself possibly."

She had spoken with intensity.

"A verdict is always harsh," he said. "But what if one who has dreamed, as we say, is now awake—has found something else so beautiful that he fears to compare his dream—to test his dream under conditions which, by comparisons, would render the test so crucial?"

Genevra knew what he meant by this. She looked up abruptly and beheld Lady Fitzhenry, boldly beautiful, superb, magnetic, coming towards the palm. She was looking for Roger, and Roger had glanced excitedly, at once, in her ladyship's direction.

"What a beautiful woman she is," said Genevra, as if spontaneously. "Have you known her long?"

"I knew her quite well on the Continent," Roger replied. "She is exceptionally—kind. Yes, I have known her some time." He paused for a moment and then resumed: "But our subject is being neglected. You have not yet replied to my question. Would a man, awake, as I said, be wise to test his boyhood's dream by a new—perhaps a dangerous—standard?"

"If a man has found a woman more beautiful than his dream," she answered, coldly, "advice would be wasted upon him. I trust I have served to amuse you, Herr Comanche." She hesitated a moment, and then added, "Do you know, I have always wished to give a musician a theme for a great composition."

"What is it?" he asked, at a loss to answer her otherwise.

"I must go and find Ellen—Lady Denby," she said.

"But your theme?"

As she moved away she said, coldly,—"Your dream might have suggested the theme, by chance,—Constancy."

He looked at her with half-sad eyes. "My dream did suggest a theme, but not that one, quite."

"Indeed? May I ask you—what?"

He still looked in her eyes as he told her, gravely,—"It is Paradise Lost."

They were swept apart on emerging from behind their sheltered nook, for a score of women, old and young, with a hint in their ears that Herr Comanche was a coming man, were lion-hunting all about the house.

Yet once again, as he found her leaving, Roger came to the side of Genevra.

"I dare to hope I shall see you again," he said. "I must ask your pardon for having failed to catch your name when I was first presented."

"Perhaps we may meet again," she said. "My name is Miss Harberton."

"Miss Harberton?" he echoed, looking upon her face with glad and eagerly searching eyes. "Not Genevra—not Miss Genevra Harberton—at last?"

"Yes, Mr. Gordon, Genevra," she said, in a strange calm. "Good-night." And, bowing ever so slightly, she was gone.

"Oh, Herr Comanche, not going?" cried the voice of Lady Denby. She was close at his side, and smiling, in her genuine friendship. "You will come again, soon? You will come and play, when the house isn't full of people? You will do that, please? Come to-morrow, at three. I have something to suggest that I hope you will like."

IV

A FRIEND COMES HOME

AMAZED thus to have found her, baffled when he tried to interpret her words and her attitude, Roger walked away from Lady Minto-Denby's with one burning thought in his brain,—Genevra.

What had he said of that dream of the past? What had she answered, half tauntingly, of his fear to test his constancy? Ay, constancy indeed! She had used that word with such significance. He could not, for all his cudgelling, make his memory give up his own speech,—that something he had said of a man making a fool of himself, in some way or other, by clinging to a childish fancy.

Genevra! How she had blossomed! How beautiful she was! It was really Genevra! No wonder he had thought they must have met before!

But he should have known—his heart should have told him—who she was! What a moment he had missed! Her loveliness had blinded his eyes and overwrought the beating of his heart. She had caused his nature so to out-thrill itself that what he felt he had scarcely recognized for the new-sprung love it was. She had looked in his eyes and stormed the citadel where so long Genevra—his little Genevra—had

ruled alone. Inconstancy? Yes, forgetfulness and almost a reckless new rapture had claimed him, even while he fought to be constant to a dream. But—God of joy!—it was she! She!—Genevra herself! This was constancy gilded with maturer love!

He thought of this suddenly, and then he thought of one thing more: She knew nothing at all of his state of mind. Therefore, what did she think? At this he felt he must rush incontinently back to Lady Denby's house, secure the direction to Genevra's home, seek her out and tell her—swiftly, unmistakably—that it was she—she who had tempted him, tested his constancy—won him away in one fleeting moment from his boyhood's love to this, his manhood's passion!

But would she care to hear such a story? Was she loyal herself to that childish fervor—that kiss in the forest? He had found her beautiful—a target for love and glances of endless desire. As he knew how many roses grow beside the road, hotly blushing to be plucked, so he knew of the throng of eager garnerers, hastening headlong forever to gather the fairest of the blossoms. Surrounded as she was, by scores of men, some of them worthy and as noble as men are moulded, how should she cleave to that dream of an hour, that love of a fleet, mocking moment?

But he had found her. His heart leaped at that

exultantly, heedless of the doubts, the worries, in his brain. He would see her again. He must see her, speak to her, tell her of what she had done, and what she had been to him year after year. All of his flippancies with Lady Fitzhenry were forgotten. He had no thought for those many hearts he had mentioned, responsive to beauty, to caressful voices, to wit. The real heart within him, pealing like the bell of his very soul, responded to Genevra, whatsoever she was. He was filled with the vast music of love, so rushing, so world-filling that the motif of doubt and anxiety struggled but faintly through the chords of the great jubilation.

How he reached his rooms Roger never stopped to think. He lived in a quaint old street, in a quainter old house, the address of which was Mayfair, West. But Mayfair the haughty had drawn itself a little aloof, to a quarter more restricted, though much humble neighborhood thereabouts alluded to itself as part and parcel of this favored portion of London town.

At the top of the half flight of stairs leading from the hall was a bijou conservatory, containing a fountain, a seat, and benches for potted plants. As he mounted the stairs, Roger was waked from his revery by the sight of a strange figure, rising at his approach from the seat near the fountain. It was a man, who had waited his coming. He was as weird a little cari-

cature on the human architectural plan as one could well conceive. His legs were amazingly long and thin for a man so small. He seemed to be bifurcated nearly to his chest. Then his body rounded out like a fat little pod, to which long slender arms were attached loosely. To complete his oddities, his neck was long, his head was almost perfectly round, and he had no hair. Not only did he arise the moment Roger appeared, but he smiled till his flat little nose seemed threatened with elimination altogether, so tight down to his face was it drawn by this look of pleasure.

He ran down the steps to meet his friend, with an enthusiasm akin to that so frequently exhibited in a faithful animal. He gripped Gordon gladly by the hand, running back up to the landing. Down he came again, and up he hastened as before, laughing all the while almost hysterically, almost without sound, but yet so heartily as not to be able to speak a word.

"Well, well, Fritz, how do you come to be here?" said Roger. "I thought you were comfortably fixed with Seidle."

Fritz still ran up and down the stairs, panting with gladness, till the top was reached and Roger fumbled in his pocket for the keys to his rooms.

"Oh, have I found you at last once more?" said the visitor, in German. "It is you; it is you!"

"But I thought you were settled, you Colossus,"

said Roger, affectionately. "Why did you come away from Seidle?"

"Shall I go away?" asked Fritz, inclining his head to one side and looking at his friend with wistful eyes. "I have no home. You are my home. I have no other home than you."

"You're a humbug," Roger told him, gently. "Wouldn't Seidle keep you, at his garden?"

"When they see me, they laugh," said Fritz, with woe upon his face. "I am such a joke at Seidle's I don't like it so much, and when I don't like it, I don't play so good. When I don't play so good, they tell me, 'Fritz, go home and learn the clarionet.' So I have come home."

He began to cry, even as he laughed and capered about to show his joy. Roger pushed open the door and bade him enter.

"Where is your clarionet?" he said.

Fritz ran down again to the small conservatory and bounded back up the stairs with the bag which held his worldly possessions. It was not a large receptacle. He opened it eagerly and brought forth the various sections of the instrument in question, as pleased as a child to think Roger had asked him where it was

"Don't blow it now, Colossus," Gordon cautioned "Perhaps I can get you a place in one of the music-hall orchestras."

Fritz appeared not to have heard. He stood with his clarionet in his hand as he stared about the room hungrily. His eyes expanded at the sight of a 'cello, a violin, a piano, and sheets upon sheets of music, not printed, but scored in pencil dots and dashes, in strokes that denoted the frenzy of a hand which had raced to keep pace with a brain through which very comets of musical thought had scorched their way.

"Not finished?" he said. "Not yet?"

Roger stood with his hand on a chair. He was so completely absorbed, as his half-sad eyes gazed blankly into space, for the moment, that nothing of what his companion had said had made itself heard.

"Fritz," he presently inquired, "are you tired? Can you write a little to-night?"

"In my grave I could write for you," said Fritz, dropping his instrument back in the bag precipitately. "Oh, the great labor! I have come home where is the great labor."

He went by instinct to the blank score sheets and pencils, even as Roger threw aside his hat and took up his violin. He laid the bow upon the strings without so much as a preliminary touch to test their tunefulness. But for fully a minute he stood motionless. Fritz sat at the table, his eyes intent on Gordon's face.

Then the theme commenced. It was played so low that an ear outside the door would have failed to

catch the notes in continuity. But Fritz caught them, every one, and his hand travelled twitchingly across the paper, as the pencil sped and left its track of fairy footsteps behind it.

Now slow, now swift, was the measure of the thought which the violin was voicing, but on it went, and the clock in a neighboring steeple tolled for one, and then for two.

When at length he halted, to think and to plan, Roger stood there still with the instrument held beneath his chin. The light fell full upon his dark, earnest face, and darker still was its changed reflection from the polished red surface of the violin. He remained thus silent minute after minute. Then his gaze wandered slowly to Fritz. Wearied as he was, beyond endurance, the comical little fellow's head had fallen forward upon the sheets. Fritz was asleep. Faithfully recording, up to the last note, he had dotted the last unfinished phrase on the paper with that skill which had made Roger to marvel so often, but nature had claimed him when the spell was broken.

Roger laid aside his instrument. He looked at Fritz fondly. Now that the face was calm, it revealed the lines of care and age. That Colossus was old had never before occurred to Roger. While class after class of students had graduated as "Bachelors" and "Masters" of music, Fritz had still remained, a spe-

cies of "Janitor of Music," at the Leipsic conservatory where Roger had studied. At the death of that kindly Herr Professor who had harbored him for years, Fritz had found himself indeed forlorn. Then Roger had come, not only with a lovable nature and a spirit of companionship and sympathy, but also as one to whom Fritz owed his life. Since that terrible hour on the Alpine glacier, no gratitude, no faithfulness could be sufficient to satisfy the little German's sense of debt. All the eager affection of his nature was concentrated on Roger. The parting at Leipsic had afflicted Fritz with an almost fatal melancholy, which nothing could dissipate save this coming "home."

Gordon was tall and powerful. Fritz was small and light. Roger took him up in his arms as if he had been but a child and carried him off to his own narrow bed, where he took off the dusty shoes and covered his guest for what remained of the night.

For himself, there was still something urgent demanding thought,—a theme in his long composition so subtly fragrant of his love for Genevra, and of doubts and hopes, that to grasp it in musical telling seemed almost beyond him.

He sat in a chair and closed his eyes. The theme eluded, haunted, soothed, disturbed, till he slept, and smiled at what he dreamed.

V

A DAY OF LETTERS

THE morning brought the customary budget of letters and papers from America. Mondays and Thursdays are scored in the memories of all self-exiled wanderers in Britain who hail from "the States." The double knock of the postman sent Roger down-stairs like the boy that he was. Two letters had come for him, one from Doctor Pingle, the other from "little" Teresa Berry, whose writing was never twice the same, since he heard from her at intervals so long between that the improvement resulting from her regular attendance at school had time to become decided between these epistles.

He read Teresa's letter first, for by habit he reserved the best for the last in whatsoever he did. He was always interested in what Teresa wrote. There was genuine sincerity in every line. Invariably, however, she told of the gratitude she felt for what he had done on that terrible night when he found her at the edge of the wood. He would much have preferred an omission of such expressions. Yet he knew it was kind of Teresa always to hope she might yet be so favored by the fates as to be able to perform some service to him or to his.

A DAY OF LETTERS

He opened his letter from Doctor Pingle with a sense of one partaking of a treat. And the closely written lines did afford him this to an extent unusual, which was saying much. There was always the hearty clap upon the back, the confidence in his powers and genius, which the doctor had gradually confessed; there was always such assurance that he was doing right; but to-day there was more.

"Don't think of coming home to me yet, my lad," he read. "Stay till victory perches on your banner. You need not give yourself this worry as to the funds. By all means, if it will quiet your morbid sensitiveness, consider that some day you will win so much that you can pay it back, but let me tell you something, lad. We have had such a boom in our lands throughout the country that I was enabled to sell my two hundred acres, out back of the village, for a sum that seems to me a fortune. Dear Roger, I have more money than I shall ever be bold enough to spend. Let me have a little joy of my fortune. Are you not more to me than a son? Lad, lad, give an old man, a fond old man, this little joy.

"Deny yourself nothing, if you would please me most. You don't know how much I wish you to succeed. I want you to be a gentleman of whom not only I, but the whole State—if not the whole country—may be proud. I want you to write that great

new composition of yours under conditions of mental ease and bodily health. Ride out often. Walk about in the parks, since you find them of such beauty. Meet nice people, for without, you will under-aim when you touch on emotions, virtues, and weaknesses. Perhaps I should have spoiled you with indulgence earlier. But when I think of the poor little sums on which you have lived and studied, up to a mere six months ago, I yearn over my lad like a silly old woman. Use what I send you, Roger, and make me a glad old man.

"Dear me, how the time, though it has dragged since your going, has flowed from beneath our feet! Yes, you will, as you say, be twenty-four in a month. But it seems to me your mind is filled enough with your work. Therefore, why not permit the papers, which have waited so long, to remain where they are till you come again home? We could look them over together then, and rejoice if they give you pleasure through the information left for this time by your father."

Roger had never been certain before that the documents left in the doctor's possession, to be opened on his twenty-fourth birthday, had been supplied by his father. During all these years of close application to his work he had given less thought to the matter than he had as a boy. He was not willing now, how-

ever, to have the information as to who and what he was deferred in the manner which the doctor had so carefully planned.

He answered the letter after breakfasting with Fritz. Many pages he filled with accounts of all he was doing, all of which he wrote in his boyish, affectionate way. But he also covered a sheet with assurances to Doctor Pingle that he would feel the keenest disappointment if he failed to receive that certain envelope, intended for his breaking on the birthday now so near at hand. "The course of my life might depend on what it was meant I should learn at this time," he wrote. "I know that your sense of things sacred in promises will prompt you to place all those papers in my hands as my father desired."

His writing finished, he completed negotiations securing a room in the house for Fritz, and board at the family table. This arrangement was the more readily affected as the young lady of the house, whose sojourn on earth for a matter of forty-seven summers entitled her to a sense of discrimination, conceived a fascination in the little bifurcated German such as no other man had ever had the honor to engender in her bosom.

With the faithful Colossus following him dog-like about the place, Roger finally went at the work of composition again and accomplished much. He was

greatly pleased that Fritz had come, partially because of the cleverness with which he facilitated the work, but more because of the lingering affection which he felt for the otherwise forlorn little being.

Engrossed absolutely in the labor that filled all his nature with emotion, he remembered abruptly that he was due at Lady Denby's house at three. He looked at his watch and found it was two o'clock already. There was barely time to dress and run.

When he sped down the stairs he found that three more letters had come since the post of the morning. He took them all and, tearing them open, read their contents as he went.

The first was an invitation from Lady Fitzhenry, who hoped he would come to a small dinner-party she was giving on Saturday evening at eight. The second was an invitation to a rose-bud tea, from the Marchioness of Rowley and the Honorable Miss Melgand, at five that afternoon. The third was a second thought from Lady Fitzhenry, who would be at home that evening to a few artistic and literary friends whom he might take pleasure in meeting.

Because he saw in these invitations the possibility of finding Genevra once again, Roger was excited thus to receive them. His heart was beating unwontedly, as it was, for the hour of three was so near at hand, with all that fate might do, if she would.

VI

THE OPENING OF VISTAS

THE fairest rose in all her beautiful garden was Lady Minto-Denby herself. The gentlemen said so, one after another, as fast as they came.

There were not very many present this afternoon. It was a perfect day. The chairs and settees on the lawn were most inviting. The house, wide open to the wantoning breeze, was deserted.

Lady Denby herself, in a great black hat of the Gainsborough school of millinery, sat at ease, chatting gayly with an author who had once upon a time made a dramatization of the "Scarlet Letter," which had come within an ace of being played. She moved but little, for the clever Jule Arthur, sometime wizard with a pencil, was making her portrait, against the garden background of color.

The only actor in London who was rich, and knew enough to remain so, was strolling up and down the grass with a slip of a youth, who had "done" a poem which had titivated all Paris for a week. As he added himself to the number, in the place of delights, Roger looked about him, quite at his ease, yet not entirely without a sense of intruding. His hostess was his

only acquaintance there. He walked forward and lifted his hat.

"How do you do, Herr Comanche? I am charmed to see you," said her ladyship, extending her hand without otherwise moving. "I am so glad you came. I wish to speak to you of something on my mind.—Ned," she added, to the author whose work had approached so perilously near to production, "give your chair to Herr Comanche. He must sit here and tell me many things."

The author arose and bowed. "With pleasure," he said, and retired gracefully.

Somewhat embarrassed, Roger bowed in return and took the seat to which his hostess waved him with her fan.

"What a charming place you have," he said.

"It's good of you to like it," she answered. "Do you like England? Have you been here long, from Leipsic?"

"Not quite six weeks," he told her. "I like it, yes, very much."

"And you are really composing a wonderful piece of music?"

"I should hardly dare to estimate its worth," he answered her, laughingly. "The limits of the human brain are so narrow that no man, I think, can both do his work and see it critically at the same time. The

theme is great enough, but that is none of my creating."

"Mr. Lennox has told me your theme is Paradise Lost. Have you taken the Miltonic conception?"

Roger nodded. "It is so easy in this world to lose a paradise that a—a dream first suggested the possibilities of such a composition, and then the poem, so world-felt and so sublimated, lifted my poor weak thought into heights supernal—if only I can reach them!"

Three ladies were coming towards them from the gate. He glanced at them quickly, hopefully. Genevra was not of the number. She had not yet come. His hostess could not have divined his thoughts, and yet she said,—

"Miss Harberton—you remember, you met her last night—promised to come this afternoon. I told her perhaps you would play for us. I don't know why she isn't here."

Something sank in Gordon's heart. If Genevra knew he was coming, and chose to remain away, could it be that she did so to avoid him? The pang of the thought was poignant. He smiled, however, and murmured something about his pleasure, when presented to the ladies who had come to where their hostess was seated.

"Sit down again, Herr Comanche," said her lady-

ship when she had welcomed the ladies and seen them gravitating nearer to the men. "I want you to tell me how nearly finished your composition is."

"In the rough it is nearly completed," said Roger. "But I could work at it for years, reducing its crudities and making it better."

"Couldn't you get it ready for public production in three or four weeks?"

"Public—production?" he echoed, in honest surprise.

"Yes. You must. I want you to do so. You see I have taken an interest in your work at once. I think you will do something—something highly creditable. I want you to promise to have your 'Paradise Lost' ready for a great production soon, at the Royal Albert Hall. Will you do it? I asked you to come here to-day to get you to promise."

Roger was instantly thinking of Fritz, the eager little Fritz, who alone, of all the men he knew, could lend him the aid which the labor of hastening his work to completion for a public recital demanded.

"Why—it would be wonderful!" he said, boyishly. "I am willing to work—hard, but I don't see how I could manage ——"

"Oh, you can leave the management to me," Lady Denby interrupted. "I have a bit of influence. I shall use it. I can get you the hall—the opportunity,

if only you will complete your composition and make it ready soon."

It seemed to Roger he was dreaming. He knew nothing of her ladyship's anxiety to create a lion, nor that such a creation must be hastened, if her social set were to enjoy her zoological triumph before the season should end with the hotter weather. He was dazed by the brilliancy of the promise which the thing contained. It was so utterly incredible—so much more wild than the wildest of his dreams.

"But perhaps—what I have done—would not be good enough," he faltered. "You have not even heard a bar of my music."

"But I have heard from Mr. Lennox that you have done something superlative," she insisted. "I wanted Genevra to hear you to-day. She is a far better judge than I am. In fact I know very little about music. But I will use the influence, if you will promise to get your work prepared. What do you say?"

"I should be but a sorry boor to refuse to do my best," he said. "But what shall I do, and how will you feel, if at the end I disappoint you utterly?"

"You are not afraid of such a finality?"

"No. It seems to me the work cannot be wholly bad. It has come from—I don't know where. There are some of its moods that I think I could never write again were I to lose the score. But I should be sorry

to over-estimate myself, or to be over-estimated by—a friend."

The earnestness with which he spoke marked him for a class far removed from that in which her male acquaintances had their orbit. She felt for a moment the contact of the physical magnetism which emanated from him always.

"You are good to agree to my proposal," she told him. "It is settled, then, that I may go ahead, and you will make yourself ready for an early production. Now, when will you play for Genevra—Miss Harberton?"

She failed to observe the flush of color that rose to the surface, beneath the dark bronze of his face.

"I shall be pleased to play whenever she shall request me," he answered.

"Very good. Jule, I am bored with this posing." She arose in her sprightly manner and struck a little gong. "Herr Comanche, are you un-American enough as yet to take tea?"

"To compromise between extremes, I take a small cup one time and then decline it the next. To-day I indulge, or I do not indulge—I have really forgotten which. To be quite impartial I must take half tea and half water."

He wished to remain. He hoped Genevra would yet appear. But the tiny spoons tinkled like silver clappers

in the dainty bells of Dresden china, the quip and compliment of insincerity assumed their many fashions, the afternoon sped away with a fragrance of crushed grass and roses—and Genevra failed to come.

Wild with delight as his flights of hope and ambition were, as he went to his home, Gordon was far from being happy. Genevra knew he would be at Lady Denby's, and she had chosen not to come. He felt the rebuke, or the slight, or whatsoever it was, she had planned to inflict. It all but cancelled the gratification he felt at the sudden, incredible opening of the portals of that musical Valhalla, of the approach to which he had hardly dared to dream.

For the hundredth time he thought back upon their meeting and of what she had said. He saw that her words had but drawn him out. He had nearly confessed that his life had been lived for that dream of the day when he met her, and played for her there in the forest, on the stump of the tree—his first 'cello. She had laughed at him. This he could see. All she had said of constancy and of meeting again had been but to mock him.

By what right had he hoped that in womanhood she would still be clinging to the thought of that moment of childish impulsiveness and folly? Doubtless she now felt ashamed of that mood of weakness, all but forgotten till he came again across her path

in this, her sphere of pride and triumph. There had been no compact between them. There had never been a reason why either should remember that mere silly prank of a boy and a girl. That he had so treasured the memory argued nothing, save that a man may be a sentimental fool.

His sensitive nature was hurt, deeply. His pride became perforce his armor. His schooling, harsh and severe, had produced its foil of iron in his soul. He went home with sentiment apparently dragging at the wheel of disdain, but his soul was more than ever in the work of concluding his "Paradise Lost."

VII

A WIDENING BREACH

GENEVRA could have slapped the face of Madam Fate with rare satisfaction, for fate it was that prevented her from taking taking tea at Lady Denby's on the afternoon of Roger's visit. Her father, having undergone one of his inopportune recurrences of memory, had left his books and his microscope long enough to keep an engagement to spend a day with his sister, at Datchet. On occasions like this, Genevra, together with his night apparel and a novel—which he never read—was indispensable. He might, indeed, have dispensed with the novel on a pinch, but to move about away from home without his child would have been as quaint as to walk without his shoes.

Never, since that day when she had come so near to seeing Roger Gordon hanged on a tree, had Genevra been so excited as the meeting at Lady Minto-Denby's had made her. Her slumbrous eyes were alight with a new, strange fire. Her full red lips were parted still, as if she could not otherwise get the breath that the leaping of her heart required. Her nature demanded that she see him again. She loved him, do what she might. She must therefore know, before

she could make herself believe him false to that first sweet day of their meeting,—know all that he was, and all he had meant by his half-confessions.

Every word he had said at Lady Denby's she rehearsed a hundred times over. His speeches brought her hopes, despairs, and needs for seeing him soon. If only some of his words had been left unsaid, how sweet many others would have sounded! He had no right, she told herself, impetuously, so to rob her again of the love of her heart, unless his own gave back again a passion as deep as he took.

He had been at a disadvantage, it was true. She had known him at once, and he had failed to recognize her. That was more than half his fault. He should have known. But part of the fault was her own. She might so easily have let him know. And what a difference that might have made!

She clung tenaciously to what he had said he was writing in his music. She had felt what it meant to his better self by the way he had looked when he told her his theme was of Paradise Lost. Oh, if his memory of that childhood love had lasted so long and meant so much, how deeply indeed his dream had entered his life! If she had been so much as that to him, really, it could never be possible he would fling it all away in lightness. It would certainly have marked his heart—as hers had been marked, with a mark to last

forever, in that one brief hour of theirs, years before. This was her hope—her all.

She was sorry now she had left him so abruptly, the second he knew who she was at last. This was one of the whys she must meet him again without delay. She felt she had been unfair, almost mean. What was he thinking, all these hours since then?

In one starving moment she thought of all those things he had said, and demanded that she be the one —the some one at present dispelling his dream of the past. Those words should not have meant any one else—they shouldn't! But, if they did—her heart would break!

And yet when she and her father came back to town, on Saturday morning, the first letter she found among the many on the table was one sealed with the crest of Lady Fitzhenry. It was merely an invitation to the dinner-party to be given that evening, but it brought back that moment in which she had felt that Roger had fallen a victim to this ravishing beauty's charms. A fierce little hatred for Lady Fitzhenry burned up in her breast. Perhaps she had also invited Roger. Indeed, this was more than likely. It was almost a certainty. If she had, what would it mean?

Genevra stamped her little foot at this. She hated Lady Fitzhenry! Roger wouldn't go! But why—why shouldn't he go? He would, of course he would.

"I won't go!" said Genevra. "I won't—I won't!"

But Genevra was a woman. Promptly at the hour of eight the guests arrived, nearly together. All had come, with the single exception of Herr Comanche. Genevra was glad—so exultantly glad. Algy Lennox was there, and she smiled at him, out of her pleasure at the absence of Gordon. The appointed time for commencing the dinner passed, however, and still their hostess waited. Genevra, all alertness, watched to see what this delay might signify.

The door-bell rang. A faint smile passed over the face of Lady Fitzhenry.

"Mr. Lennox, will you take Miss Harberton, if you please?" she said, and moving swiftly among her guests, she paired them off adroitly, and fluttered back to the door to head the procession to the dining-room beyond. Almost at the threshold she met the delinquent for whom she had waited,—Roger.

Genevra beheld him, tall, dark, handsome, perhaps a trifle tired about his deep-set eyes, and her heart nearly fainted. With a smile of welcome their hostess took his arm and gently turned him about.

"Will you take me?" she said. "You are just in time."

A trifle confused by the formal array of guests, to none of whom he was presented, Roger had not so much as an opportunity to glance the company over,

till he found himself at the table beside her ladyship. When he took his seat with the others, he at last discovered Genevra, far down the table, talking and laughing gayly with Lennox. A bright spot of color made her cheeks glorious. Her slumbrous eyes, thus seen in profile, were so lustrously beautiful that it seemed as if he could never look anywhere else.

But she scorned to flash an answer to his yearning gaze. She had looked at him, pleadingly, longingly, for a time that seemed to her an age, but not so much as a glance had he deigned to give in response. He was false! He loved—that creature beside him! Humiliated, angered, ready to sob, Genevra had turned her eyes away and would look no more where he was.

Remembering all that Lennox had told her of Gordon and Lady Fitzhenry, she hated them both. If he could be so happy, so could she. Algy Lennox was willing to help. She checked an impulse to laugh aloud, hysterically. Instead she smiled at Lennox, who had not the penetration to see how distraught she was. Nothing should tempt her or bribe her now to look where Roger was sitting.

And Gordon, beholding her gay with Lennox, pointedly avoiding the courtesy of even a nod, read the confirmation of his fears and doubts already gnawing at his heart. He could have groaned for the anguish of

that moment. He had hoped—even since that Thursday afternoon at Lady Denby's garden tea—hoped that her absence had not been intentional—that something would yet explain it away and leave them at least where they stood when last they parted. He had worked since then in a fever of alternating doubt and hope. He had sounded the depths of despair, he had scaled the pinnacles of a joy sublime, and in such a mood as this he had roughly finished his composition.

The chatter of conversation from many different centres began at once.

"Herr Comanche, you were naughty not to come on Thursday evening," said the hostess in her sweetest mood.

"I thought your friends would forgive me," said Roger.

"Yes, but what of me? Did you think I should do the same?"

"Why not? There was one less to divide yourself among."

"On the contrary," she assured him, "had you come I should have devoted myself to one only. As it was, I was bored with such a division as you speak about."

Gordon was not a little amazed at her candor. He had not yet recovered from his first surprise at finding himself her honored guest. He looked at her half

inquiringly, and met such a kindling glance from her eyes that he felt the color rising to his face.

"Then your escape was providential," he murmured. "When a fit of work is on me, I am worse than indifferent company. Therefore I look for your pardon." He laid his finger across the mouth of his glass, at the downward dip of a bottle's head.

"Don't look in an empty glass," she said. "Have a little of the wine."

"It is wine enough to be here," he answered. "A drink would dull the fragrant exhilaration."

Lady Fitzhenry knew better. With fumes gone to his head she always found it easier to go to a man's imagination, or his heart. But she could not insist.

"I had thought you were not an idle flatterer, Herr Comanche," she told him.

"Can one be called idle when employed at anything —even flattery?" he parried skilfully.

"Your reluctance for parting with a compliment would make me prize even a small one," she said, smiling upon him bewitchingly. "Are you not aware that to poor weak woman compliments are the nectar of life?"

"I had always believed that goddesses live on ambrosia," Roger said, with gravity. "I fear my wit would furnish less than the bread and butter of compliments."

"I never knew a man who could rightly appraise such commodities. You should bring me a few of your samples."

"If I parted with my samples I should make myself insolvent," said Roger.

"You mean, plainly, that you will give me no compliments," she said, archly. "You are honest, if cruel. You are also unique; therefore I must like you whether I will or no. But I ask you, is this coercion fair?"

"As fair as I am," he answered, "and fairer than many deductions."

"You are so outrageously discreet," she told him, and, turning to a much bewhiskered lord who sat at her left, she said, "I beg your pardon."

His lordship repeated, "I was saying, it is quite the season for golf."

The glance that Roger sent to where Genevra was sitting found her even more animated, bright, and kind to Lennox than before. Her own little half-hopeful look in his direction, a minute earlier, had destroyed all possibility of a truce between them. It was positively indecent, Genevra told herself in anger, for Roger and Lady Fitzhenry to look such unbridled admiration for each other in company.

VIII

A FIRST VIOLIN

THE dinner, by a stroke of fortune, Gordon thought, came to an end at last. The ladies arose with one accord and left the room, while the men accepted cigars from the butler, shifted their chairs to postures of ease, assembled in pairs and groups, and commenced to smoke, and to drink in earnest.

"I fancy I met you at the Minto-Denby's," said the whiskered lord to Gordon. "Do you golf?"

"Not often," said Roger, who had never known the difference between a caddy and a bunker.

"Huh! I can recommend Surrey. Fine country for golf." He nodded affably and made his way to the whiskey and soda.

Roger left the end of the table and went to where Lennox was lighting a flat cigarette.

"How are you, old chap?" said Lennox. "Deuced rapid strides you're making into the graces of her ladyship."

"Your introduction is the badge that wins me any favor," Roger assured him. "I want you to do something more. I need your help."

"So Gulliver may have said to the pigmies," Lennox replied.

"This is a very humble Gulliver addressing the Brobdignagians," Gordon said, with a smile. "I want you not only to give me an orchestra, but to play first violin yourself."

"I say! Sit down and say that again. An orchestra? Whatever for, old chap?"

"Lady Denby has asked me to give that composition, you know, my 'Paradise Lost,' in the Royal Albert Hall, and I want you to play first violin, and get me, or help me to get, an orchestra together at once, all save one clarionet."

"My word!" said Lennox, staring at his friend in amazement.

"Yes, it is a wonderful piece of luck—a miracle, isn't it?"

"Rather! You are a wonderful chap. Awfully good of you to ask me to play."

"Nonsense," said Roger. "There is no one I ever knew that I'd rather have to help me get the effect I'm after. I have wished a thousand times I could play as you do, Algernon."

"Thanks, old man, but your music will still go on after I'm dead and forgotten a hundred years."

"Oh, never! I know better. But you will do it? You'll play?" said Gordon, eagerly.

"I will, Comanche. To be sure I will—and honored to do it."

"And you'll help me to get the others? I want everything—the more in the orchestra the better. Do you know of a good lot of men?"

"I know a selected organization. They've gone in for art for art's sake, and that sort of rot; they can do the work,—they do want a lot of beating. They are half of them German, some Hungarians, and some bally good Britishers, like myself."

"Good. I knew you would know what to do and how to help me out. When can we get them? I want the first rehearsal soon."

"Next week. Say Wednesday afternoon. Would that answer?"

"For trials, yes. I may want to make a few changes, —but maybe not. I hope not. I should like to have them arrange a date for the first rehearsal as soon as they can."

"Right you are. I shall see their manager to-morrow—no, Monday." He added, in a moment, "I say, old fellow, I'm jolly well glad you've got such a chance. Your fortune's as good as made."

"Gentlemen, shall we join the ladies?" said a man who had assumed the duties of spokesman, and, turning to the bewhiskered lord, as they started away, he added, "Rare good sort, that lady you took in to dinner."

His lordship's eye almost lighted. "Grand woman

at golf," he said, and they passed from the apartment which they had hung with their banners of smoke.

The ladies were found to be amusing themselves with a dog that "stood on guard," "saluted her Majesty," and "died for the Queen." These tricks the beast continued to perform by himself, even after all had ceased to pay attention to his antics. At length, in disgust, the creature crawled off and sulked beneath the lounge.

Cleverly avoiding a movement on the part of Lady Fitzhenry to corner him, Gordon presently found himself confronted by Lennox and Genevra, come upon him while they too were unaware of his near presence.

He would still have managed to pass, with a smile at Lennox, but the latter halted, intent upon a little test which the lurking jealousy within him chanced to prompt.

"I say, you two must remember you met only Wednesday night," he said. "Miss Harberton, you know Herr Comanche?"

"Great pleasure," Gordon murmured, in confusion, as he bowed.

"We know each other—quite well," said Genevra, coldly. "Really, Mr. Lennox, I must be saying good-night to Lady Fitzhenry."

She bowed as they passed, and Roger was left there chilled to the core of his heart.

IX

THE DARK HOURS

THE hour of Gordon's recital was nearly at hand, and Roger and Genevra had not met since the night at Lady Fitzhenry's party. She was the first to see him as he came across the lawn at Lady Denby's on the last afternoon before the production of his work.

He was wan, rather than pale, and his eyes appeared more than usually sad and deeply set. The weariness expressed in his face and walk advertised itself to Genevra till her heart yearned over him maternally. She knew that close application to his labors had exhausted much of his vital force, but she was not aware it was his heart-soreness that had robbed him of his spirit.

He and Fritz had toiled unceasingly with orchestrations and changes in the composition. Roger had also expended hours drilling the numerous musicians, already in training under his masterful guidance, to interpret his musical creation. He had tried to forget that this Genevra of the present was the same Genevra he had known so long before. There was sweetness left in memory, of which the present was so barren. There was bitterness in the cup of to-day such as his dream, even without a promise of realization, had

never known. But he found it impossible to divide that little Genevra of his boyhood from this proud, regal young woman he had found at the end of his search. And the bitter and sweet of reality and dream mingled, till neither the one nor the other could be wholly definite. He loved her still—more than he had loved her as a boy, or throughout his long years of waiting. Therefore he clung to this present, harsh as he found it, and had no peace.

Lady Denby hastened forward to meet him as he came from the gate. She was confident of success at last. Merely to give a recital at Albert Hall, where all England's *élite* would applaud his effort, no matter how far from great it might prove, would do the work. She thought, however, she saw more than a negative success promised in Herr Comanche's earnestness and modesty. The recital had been advertised with an effectiveness far exceeding anything possible with printer's ink; the house was sold out at preposterous prices; the world of society, culture, and music would sit at the feet of her *protégé*, where he could keep them, if he had but the power and the genius.

Nevertheless, her ladyship was excited. A downright fiasco would be disastrous, terrible. She knew she risked much, thus to present a bronze-complexioned Red-Indian from the wilds of the States. If he failed signally, she would go to the Continent for a

year. But if only he could win success—what a triumph, what a fad, her Red-Indian would instantly become!

"I am so glad to see you, Herr Comanche," she said, in all sincerity. "And how is the work? Are you not a bit tired? Does your orchestra satisfy you now? Quite? I have been dying to hear just one rehearsal, but I haven't. I have kept away bravely—for a woman. I do hope everything will go smoothly and just as you want it! You must come and sit down and have a cup of tea. It will do you good, really. Indeed, you need it!"

"You are far too kind," said Gordon, quietly. "I came to report that everything seems to be heading as well as one could expect. It all depends now on the worth of what I have written. If it fails,"—he hesitated and a faint smile passed across his face—"if it fails, it and I and my hour will soon be forgotten. The failures consigned to oblivion must find themselves in a large company."

"That sounds so pessimistic. You are not discouraged, Herr Comanche? You are only tired, I hope. It does take it out of one to work so hard and constantly. You are a bit worn,—that's all, of course?"

"That's all," he echoed. He had seen Genevra hesitate and turn away, to talk with the Honorable Miss Melgand, who had come to sip a cup of tea. He had

not been further hurt—she had made him already numb to woundings; his weariness and mental fatigue had completed the dulling of his feelings. He added, in a moment, "The ego within me is too hopeful to contemplate defeat for to-morrow evening, but we never know. A man may fail in more ways than one."

"I feel so glad of that ego," Lady Denby told him, earnestly. "I cannot see failure anywhere within your sphere. Have I not, indeed, shown you my trust?"

"In a manner so generous that I shall never forget it—never fail in my sense of gratitude," he said.

"Oh, dear me, don't spoil me like that," she said, with a pretty smile. "Now, how will you have your cup of tea to-day?"

"I will have you drink it, to the success of the work made possible by a kind and modest woman."

"Now, what nonsense," she said. "You must drink it yourself. You need it, I know. Genevra," she called to the girl, who was passing near by with Miss Melgand, "come here and induce Herr Comanche to drink some tea."

Genevra could not refuse to stop.

"But—I—really, I would rather not interfere with Herr Comanche's tastes, or inclinations," she said. "A man always knows what he wants, so much better than we."

"You mean they think they know, my dear. I want

you to sit here and tempt him. He's tired, with all of his working. Miss Melgand, I'll give you those tickets now, if you'll please come to the house for a moment."

She arose at once. Her sprightly manner was persuasive. She always had her way. She walked Miss Melgand off, and Genevra could do nothing but obey. She sat down, her heart like a bird suddenly caught and held in the hand.

"How—will you have—your tea?" she managed to say, without looking up.

"Any way—the easiest way to mix it," he answered, a little hoarsely.

The easiest way—the quickest way to mix it. He wanted to finish an unpleasant bit of business. She knew it. Oh, if only she could hate him! She did hate him. He had done every possible thing to wound her. She bit her lip, which would have trembled. She could be as cold and disdainful as he—and as hateful! She poured a cup of the brew, without either cream or sugar.

"I couldn't do it more quickly," she said, as she placed it where he could take it. Then without realizing how it would sound she added, "I hope it won't detain you long."

He forgot what his own remark had been, which partially induced this speech. Therefore the poignancy of her words was the more complete. For a moment,

however, he could not believe she had actually dismissed him. But there was nothing else it could mean.

"It shall not, since you wish it," he said, in his calm, low voice, and rising, he bowed. "I shall go at once. Good-day."

She looked up, startled, and saw him turn away. His profile only was towards her. How classical—how beautiful it was! It fascinated, held her enthralled. Yet she noted the look of sadness about his eyes and the weariness written on his face.

A cry arose to her lips—the cry of her heart, but she choked it back. He had wanted to go; he had gone. She had said—what did she say?

A light of beseeching blazed in her eyes for a moment, and then it died away. He was cruel. He was brutal, to treat her thus. The cup of tea she had poured for him stood there untouched—refused.

She was unaware that Lennox, who had come in time to witness the scene between herself and Roger, was watching her narrowly now. As through a haze she saw that Gordon met Lady Denby, who was now returning to the garden, and that he bade her good-by and was going. Unable to bear the thought of being spoken to by any one, she left the table at once and walked quickly away to the farther side of the pear-trees back of the hedge.

Lennox, when he strolled around to come upon her

accidentally, found her weeping, in anger, and yet as if her heart would break. He knitted his brows, but he prudently withdrew.

It stood revealed—the whole situation. She loved Comanche. He had felt it earlier; he knew it now. His jealousy had made itself ready before. It leaped upon friendship promptly. This thing was wholly unworthy of Comanche. He would not have believed the man would step in to rob him thus.

But perhaps, since Genevra it was who was vexed to the point of tears, Comanche was not so much to blame,—at least not a deliberate robber. She cared for him, and apparently her feelings met with no response. It lay all with Genevra. Still, if Comanche had not come where she was, she would never have been so foolish. And Comanche had asked him to help in making the "Paradise Lost" a triumph and himself a lion of genius!

X

A MAN'S TEMPTATION

HAVING pounced upon friendship, jealousy clung to its prey. When Lennox went home he was no longer able to think coherently or justly of Gordon's attitude towards Genevra. If she loved Comanche now, she would doubtless, in the way of all sentimental and impressionable women, idolize him when he should stand upon the pinnacle of such a success that all society would turn to do him homage.

That his work was great Lennox believed, nay, felt and knew. He had rejoiced in its power, up to this moment, for was not Comanche, in a manner, his own discovery? Had he not espoused his cause and introduced him to Lady Denby? This made the present situation all the more galling.

A faithful, generous friend, under normal conditions, Lennox had given to Gordon as sound an affection and as honest an admiration as one man may well extend to another. On the other hand, he had loved Genevra in this straightforward, honest manner of his for more than a year. That she liked him he had long believed. That she loved him sufficiently well to become his wife he had never dared as yet to imagine. But she would learn—she must some day respond to

his never-failing thoughtfulness and desire to make her happy, if this silly business with Comanche should not ruin everything.

He had no desire to drag Comanche down, to belittle his coming achievement, but thus to have Genevra regarding the man, and now possibly to have her still further wrought upon by what he would win on the following night, was quite too much for a man to endure with complacency.

Lennox was returning home early even now, in response to a promise he had made himself that he would practice once again for an hour on some of the passages in Comanche's "Paradise Lost" intrusted to his care as first violin. With many conflicting emotions he came to his rooms, and mechanically turned to the sheets of music. He looked at them vaguely. Impatiently he walked across the room. Before the window he halted, and with hands thrust in pockets stared out in the street, but with a vacant gaze. He had half a mind to refuse to play at Comanche's recital. To beg off—suddenly to contract a headache—would not be a difficult matter. It would be a wretched trick, he knew, but his place could be filled.

Across his mental vision then came the look he could see on Comanche's face—in his eyes—as he learned of the dastardly desertion at this, the eleventh hour. No! He could not turn traitor like that. Comanche

was such a trusting, lovable fellow. Damn it! a man would feel himself such a brute! Moreover, Comanche would fill the vacancy, if he did desert. Indeed, one violin would hardly be missed. There were scores of men who could play his part. The large success of the composition did not depend on so insignificant a matter as the absence or presence of one trained musician.

Returning to the sheets of the score again, he took up his violin, turned a laggard string, and went swiftly through the parts with which he felt familiar.

Thus running through the sheets, fingering, more than actually playing, he came to the passage which concerned him most. Original and daring to the last degree, Comanche had employed every possible means to acquire his effects. Not infrequently he had left the whole expression to a single instrument, at various points throughout his composition. It was one of these with which Lennox was working.

Short though the passage was,—a mere trio of phrases,—its importance was complete. It was a slender thread on which the composer had dared to hang the whole fabric of his work. How vital it was Lennox fully comprehended. He had even arisen in the night to try it again and again, after having spent an hour upon it before retiring, so much did the notes convey, so eager had he been that the utmost of their power should fall without blemish from his instrument.

He played this now. He worked with it, felt for its subtleties. Filled as his mind had been with the conflict between his loyalty and his jealousy, his thoughts this evening were uncontrollable. He saw the notes which Roger had written, but there was mockery between them. The mood of the theme ceased to be Gordon's; it was his.

Even as he played, some devil of rebellion raced through his brain. He sawed at his violin with a savage bow, and whipping the phrase he was playing from the strings, he suddenly fingered a few mad notes which the jealousy on him provoked. The notes were frivolous, flippant, yet they fitted what had gone before as if in natural sequence. There was something diabolical in the ease with which he had foisted in these spurious notes, and in the sickening force which they had to pervert the whole motif of the composition and to bring it all suddenly down to the cap-and-bells of music.

Lennox stood amazed at himself, as he made this discovery. So well did he know the arts of composition that he realized, as no layman could possibly have done, the power for havoc which this accident had placed in his grasp. So near did sublimity hang to the ludicrous that just the trifling alteration of a bar could topple the whole great temple of beauty from its place. Moreover such bathos as this would render of the

entire thing would so crash upon Comanche's head that he would never be able to rebuild his structure in its majesty. He would stand appalled. He would lose control of his orchestra. He would go to pieces and fail, in the very midst of his triumph.

The thought was terrible to Lennox. It was wild, absurd—impossible. Yet he played the passage again as he had before, and it sounded more fatally flippant than he had thought at first. The sweat broke out on his temples; his heart knocked within him violently. He went to the window on his tiptoes, guiltily, and looked out as if to assure himself that Comanche was not in the street below, listening. Then he went to his door, opened it, looked out in the hall, and closed it again without a sound.

He was alone. There was no one to hear him do this deed. He was trembling; his mouth grew parched as he came to where the sheet of music lay. He could see where those devil's own notes would spot the lines, if he wrote them in. There was no need so to jot them down. He could play them without such a guidance. An accident, a moment of mental aberation, would explain the act. It was such a trifling matter—such an easy way to render Comanche less god-like in Genevra's eyes.

With his violin beneath his chin Lennox tried to play the passage as Roger had scored it on the paper. He

shook; his fingers were nerveless, wet with perspiration. Once more he played those interlarded notes. He placed the instrument quickly on the table and leaned against the mantel.

It was all Comanche's fault—his own doing. Why had he dared to trust his whole great theme to a single violin? It was a musical sword of Damocles, swung from a filament of sound. He had made the temptation too strong to be resisted. A man could conquer himself to some extent. He, Lennox, might have abandoned the whole obligation to play at the very last minute. He had resisted that—but this was so different. This was fair. There was love and war to make it fair. Every man must take care of himself! Lennox knew in his heart that the injury he now contemplated to the composition would prove irreparable, —fatal in the blow it would strike. He could not absolutely resolve to do this dastardly thing which lay in his power; that is to say, he did not admit or state to himself that he would commit this murder on Comanche's music, but he knew that he would not be able to play that passage correctly.

For the last time he took up his instrument. Those notes of fiendish ridicule—like so much negro patter-music—danced mockingly from the strings.

XI

ROGER'S RECITAL

LIKE the inside of the large round end of a most prodigious egg, the Royal Albert Hall's interior arched upward to a vault wherein a cluster of stars would not have seemed inappropriate. Its vastness was the more impressíve for the throngs upon throngs of men and women so held and belittled in its spaciousness. What a dark, breathing mass those human beings made!

The floor of the hall was a firmament of faces in a setting of black, only partially broken by the white or vari-colored gowns of the ladies. Above them the tiers on tiers rose upward towards the vault itself, all of them so crowded that the brain refused to take in the numbers.

As their wealth descended, the people in the hall had ascended. But even the topmost gallery was filled. Many persons stood behind the more fortunate holders of seats. It is amazing what thousands of Londoners deny themselves necessities to satisfy their craving for music. From the beggar to the throne they are a music-loving people.

From his place of vantage behind the platform Gordon looked out upon the scene presented to his view. For the first time in his life he felt that sense of awe

which the presence of thousands of one's fellow-beings, concentrating their whole attention upon himself, must bring inevitably to any man. He was pale, but his face was resolutely calm. His features had taken on that re-chiselled appearance, so refining to his already classical features, which great emotion always produced upon his countenance. He was faultlessly dressed and gloved. Among the men of his orchestra he was not only tall, but he was obviously masterful. His deep-set eyes were burning with the suppressed fire of his nature. His black masses of hair, crowned him as with an emblem of power.

When the first excitement of beholding the place so filled had passed, he scanned the great, confusing area for one face,—Genevra's. She was not to be seen. Search as he would, he could see neither herself nor Lady Denby. They would doubtless arrive presently, he thought. If she failed to come,—ah, well, there was little left for bitterness to accomplish now.

When he turned about he found Algernon Lennox, just arrived. The man was pale; his gaze faltered when it met the friendly smile in Gordon's eye. Roger put out his hand and Lennox took it guiltily.

"I am glad to see you here in such good time," said Roger. "But don't be nervous; everything looks propitious. We ought to make a success."

"Grand—house," Lennox stammered. "Your fortune's—made."

He went his way to hang up his hat and remove his violin from its case.

The nervousness of waiting was more or less developed in all the men behind the curtain. They walked about uneasily. Over against the wall stood a comical, bifurcated figure, all match-legs and rounded little body. It was Fritz. With his round, hairless head inclined to one side he was eying Roger so wistfully, that presently Gordon was attracted by his gaze. He went over and smiling at him affectionately laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"All right?" said he. "Feeling up to the mark?"

"I am so happy it makes me knock my knees," said Fritz. He held up his clarionet, to show that he was ready to commence forthwith. "When are we at it?" he inquired.

"Soon," said Roger. "There is the lady who will sing to start the programme along. I think the organist is just about ready to lead you all to the platform."

Presently, indeed, the word was passed and his many musicians filed out and assumed their places, whereupon there ensued that sawing and tuning at many strings which sets the heart to faster beating and the senses all at attention.

Then came silence. The great organ pealed, as it

voiced a thought made immortal by Beethoven, and the evening's tension had commenced.

In a generous mood and with appetites whetted, the audience responded heartily, when the opening performer bowed. They welcomed the singer who had kindly lent her services to making the entertainment more complete, and later they permitted her departure with reluctance. A hush then fell upon the vast assemblage, and Herr Comanche stepped forth, with his active, graceful stride.

A second of stillness, as they looked upon his dark, intellectual face, held his beholders. Their burst of welcoming applause was the more spontaneous and electrifying for this brief delay.

Gordon bowed. He bowed again, many times. He felt that he had his sea of humanity receptive already. But he could see nothing, the lights so blinded his eyes. Genevra, for whom he had no time to search again, was sitting so close that he had glanced beyond her.

What litheness his movements expressed as he stepped to his stand! The silence became as far extending as the farthest limits of the hall. He raised his baton and stood for a second immovable.

Slowly, so slowly that its downward course seemed at first an illusion, the wand of power descended.

Far away, on the strings of a harp, a faint, ethereal strain of music arose. It came; it went. Intangible

as perfume of sound it stole on the senses with subtle beauty that stilled the very heart, so eager became the ear to catch the strains.

The wand of enchantment, apparently drawing forth the music from a source unseen, now summoned a second, a third, and yet a fourth distant harp to waft its melody hither. A low, softened note, as of a bugle sounding from the very empyrean, made a glad contribution to the theme. The violins now faintly caught the strangely sweet refrain and mingled their pean of rejoicing to what had gone before, even as the organ added bugle after bugle, faintly and amazingly interweaving that same indefinable motif. The 'cellos, the reeds, and the brass, aroused so faintly that the entrance of their tones could scarcely have been detected, came as if nearer and nearer with the motif, till the great hall thrilled with the exquisite beauty of the fugue so unmistakably interpreting the heavenly choir, in all its sublimity of joy and purity immortal.

The gates of Paradise itself swung wide to let the music through. The rustle of wings, the voices of angels, the touch divine on the strings of harps,—all came upon the breathless world and lifted men to aspiration.

Kindly, encircling, ennobling, the chorus of angels swept downward and upward and all about, in a volume sufficient for the universe, and yet with a melody

so soft, so intricately enticing, that the soul came forth and yearned to partake of this happiness ineffable.

Then back of the melody, harsh, yet harmonious with all the instruments, came a fiendish laugh, a chuckle of jealousy,—Satan's malevolence. Bolder, louder this laughter grew, and the harps shivered fearfully and fled to where their expression was fainter. The wondrous beneficence diminished. The laughter, the taunting, the defiance of Satan assumed the ascendancy. He mocked with the combined voices of a score of instruments.

A note as of wonder, so deep as to be unfathomable, sounded through even Satan's devilish cogency of utterance. It came again, more near, more stern, and yet as if in patience still. But the laughter sounded such an arrogance that suddenly all the thunders of the firmament seemed gathering from far and near, in one great voice. The last faint notes of the motif of the heavenly choir were still to be heard, as they hastened away from the scene of where Satan, the great accuser, would fain usurp the power of the All Jehovah and fling defiance at his Master.

Then swift and terrible were the diabolical concentrations of his power where this Lucifer made ready for his battle. But more thunderous, more awful were the slow-born angers of the Mighty One.

Sounding its piercing flames of sound, that hurtled

madly through the air, the potency of evil commenced its struggle for supremacy.

In the utterance of all created space, arrayed against disturbers of the laws immutable, the answering shock of Omnipotence presently answered.

With shrieks, with screams of rage and hatred, with fierce, stubborn clinging to his confidence, great Satan fought.

But in crashes of doom, so weighty that it seemed the stars themselves fell crushingly down, the sentence of banishment pealed from the fearful realms of Majesty.

Then with a mort-cry shivering through eternity, was Satan beaten backward and downward, till crash on crash drowned out his terrible laughter and a mighty roar and rush of air went with him as he plunged to the bottomless depths.

There came a hush, a note of sorrow, in the voice of the All Pitiful, and heaven had closed its gates.

This was the end of the introduction. Breathlessly the auditors sank back in their seats. Then, when a moment had somewhat cleared the spell, they paid their tribute to a master.

XII

THE CLIMAX

THE pause was but brief till the opening bars of the first part of "Paradise Lost" broke the stillness of the hall, yet as he faced his auditors, Herr Comanche beheld Genevra's face at last. It was white, eager, tense with emotions. His heart leaped in his breast as he found her there so near.

He was nervous no longer. He was rapt in the execution of his theme. How the audience was receiving the work he knew not, nor did he care. He feared the work was not so great as he had heretofore supposed, or hoped. Therefore he gave the full sum of his energy, his very vitality, to bring forth the utmost feeling and art in every man about him.

As the baton fell it touched into life a scene of Eden, second only in beauty to his music-pictured heaven itself. From an earthly point of view it was almost more replete with loveliness. Its hum of bees, its susurrus of leaves all rustling in a warm, summer zephyr, its songs of birds and tinkle of rills, conveyed a more sensuous beauty than that of heaven. And with this permeating all its scene, the faint, far echo of the motif of the heavenly choir seemed as a perfume of the flowers that grew in the garden. This motif, as it

hovered over all the place of delights, seemed also to represent the breath of divinity, symbolizing the guardian spirit which made the place the Paradise it was.

The beauties now became manifest in runes that crept one upon another, as if the heaven-blessed mortals who dwelt therein were wandering hand in hand from one surpassing feature to the next. The blossoms from the trees clashed like soft, pink cymbals. The trees were lyres whereon the breeze made melody. The grass, as it grew upward, struck lightly every note in Eden's diapason. The drops of water fell in caves, on bells of agate till they faintly chimed.

The spell of peace and beauty grew till all that was sensuous in human veins yearned gaspingly for yet new senses to be played upon.

No more had this thirst of an appetite created by indulgence so increased, than the evil chuckle of Satan returned to underly the symphony. Winding and coiling in and out, this motif came, till something of beauty supernal retired, to give its place to the visitor, come like a snake to enter the realm of wholesome pleasures.

Afraid, yet curious, the musical themes retreated, approached and lingered at last where Lucifer laughed his temptations. He held them enthralled by the wonder of his story; he swayed them, urged them to a

recklessness of sensuous indulgence. He taunted, derided, scorned their fears, and mocked their Creator.

With shame at first, and then more boldly, the voices in Eden laughed at last with the tempter. During a pause, as if in the final second of hesitation, the motif of the heavenly choir was heard once more, as it died away in the distance and left a wail of despair to contend alone against all that soulless laughter.

Most sinuously winding in once more, the Lucifer motif led the way to the fruit forbidden. In the hush of Satan's laughter, a shiver of new, strange ecstasies commenced. A woman's coaxing and tempting slipped forth from the violins to join with the voices of the 'cellos, where Satan laughed more loudly with his promises of power.

The thrill that shot through Adam then was wonderful. Strong, animal, aggressive, it carried all before it, till something akin to a fear was commingled with the far more timid, yet persistent appetite of the senses awakened in his temptress. Under and over all a theme of growing passion swelled and rose and fanned the air with the heat that coursed with the fire of youth unbridled in its lust of life.

Voluptuous, inflaming to the brain and blood, the music blended every force, every beauty at command, in the nuptials of abandonment to joy. The bird-songs partook of the wanton indulgence in pleasure.

THE INEVITABLE

The bees were all humming of passion that turned to scarlet the petals where they touched. The wind was a hot, quick breath that carried the pollen of love from blossom to blossom.

But, breaking through the mad expression of the earthly transports, came the motif, half anger, half sorrow, where the gates of heaven above had opened once again, to let out the angel of vengeance, sent so reluctantly downward by the voice that commanded all power.

The culmination of Eden's bliss broke like a rush of white-hot floods, where music thrilled and trembled, rose to a height unthinkable, sank into ecstasy unspeakable, and ended.

The breaths that were held escaped from a thousand pairs of lips in that spell-bound audience. The madness calmed, the cheeks that had flushed so red slowly paled. A storm of applause swept upward till the hall was thundering at the end of part one of the music.

* * * * * * *

Not for long did Gordon permit the ardor in his auditors to cool. He had labored unremittingly himself, he was now unsparing of audience and orchestra as well.

His baton reproduced, for the opening of part two, the last breathless trembling, where forbidden joy in Eden found itself sated, and Lucifer, laughing at his

deed accomplished, glided tortuously away. His retreat was taken step by step before the approach of a stern, yet sorrowing Presence, where the level tones of the angel of retribution descended on the mad delights of the Garden.

The twitter of birds ceased in awe. The bees no longer hummed. In the trees the zephyr stirred not a leaf. The calm was one in which the wantons of the garden whispered in fear, as the stern, cold voice bade them, once, twice, thrice, stand forth for judgment.

A moan of dread, a chattered utterance of guilt, expressed the tangible dread which had come upon the place of beauties.

The summons of that all-compelling voice, where the minister of heaven's dreadful power commanded all things living in that garden to be gone, was sublimely calm, simple, and comprehensible. It awed; it enthralled the senses.

Strangely in contrast came again that motif of coaxing, coquetting, as if a very siren would bribe the avenging angel with a kiss, to leave them where they were.

The end of this theme, of the wanton ashamed, was thrice more terrible than even that awful voice that again repeated, "Go!"

A wail for mercy, a shiver of the chill they could feel approaching, arose, as if to drown that dread

injunction of banishment. Contrition, repentance, the first hysterical promises of the human race, never, never again to commit a deed of folly, contended against that utterance of doom. But like the tolling of the bell of finality, that motif from heaven, half sorrowful, but always implacable, assumed such dimensions that nothing could rise above it to be heard.

A note of anguish sounded where the fallen, in fear and absolute humiliation, sped out through the gates, with heads hung low in shame. Then Eve shrilly screamed as she darted back once more, still in the hope of pardon, only to hear the clangor of the barriers that closed, and the sudden cutting off of all those faint songs of Eden's beauty.

Above the storm that suddenly swept upon the pair, thus outcast in the wilds, the angel's voice drove them farther and farther from the Paradise they had sacrificed forever. The wails of the wind, the swaying of branches, the slash of the rain upon their naked bodies, made the theme a wild and vivid thing. The breathlessness of the two that ran and ran, never able to escape either from the voice of condemnation or the laughter of Lucifer, was conveyed powerfully. The imagination pictured the darksome woods, the brambles, the lurid sky, and the dens of prowling beasts, where the sinners were lost in the wilderness.

THE CLIMAX

It was when they were weary, torn, and suffering hunger, that despair came inevitably upon the two. And as if the woman were the first to realize the boundless beauties of that heritage from heaven, lost beyond all human power of redemption, a single violin wailed forth her unutterable woe, when the storm had left them stark and abandoned of their Maker.

This was the passage left to Lennox alone. He knew the opportunity he had waited for had come. This woe was the heart-cry in which all that had gone before had its termination—its significance.

Comanche had hushed every instrument there, as if he played upon them all himself. His power had been tremendous. His orchestra had bent to him, risen to his beckoning, swayed with his every emotion. He leaned far out towards Lennox now. The agony of the suffering two from Eden was on his face. In his eyes burned a hopelessness unfathomable.

"Now—now!" he seemed to be urging, as he looked upon the first violin.

Something gave way in Lennox's brain. He played with a passion, a power he had never before attained. His treacherous purpose, his jealousy, everything fled from him, leaving his heart almost still, in his rekindled love for his friend. He played what he saw, —he forgot there could be a note of frivolity substi-

tuted. He was lifted out of himself, to a something sublime, as he sounded that anguish wrung from a soul that had lost its paradise.

He sank in his chair, undone, when the motif was caught by string after string to be woven into all of the tale that revealed those wanderers from the Garden tracking mindlessly onward, in their agony, on their ever-mocking search for the gates that led to what they had lost.

And so the motif continued, with the music's story of those days on days of despair. It clung to the voice of the woman through all her travail, when the first-born son was given in her keeping. It was when she beheld this child, in all its innocence, that her greatest heart-sorrow broke from her lips.

Once again the composer had voiced her emotion with a single instrument. To the faithful Fritz, in whose clarionet he had measureless confidence, Roger had intrusted the maternal woe of Eve. Rogèr was trembling with emotion himself, as the voices of all the instruments ceased and slowly he motioned for this, her moaning cry.

There came a pause. Fritz was looking at him out of eyes that streamed. He tried to play; he tried to choke back all that he felt; then a note like a great sob broke from his instrument.

It was terribly poignant. A sound of weeping from

someone in the hall seemed an echo of the woe of Eve, come down through the ages.

The 'cellos, the violins, the harps took up the theme again, and on it went with the tale of the earth's supremest anguish.

A ceaseless prayer for the forgiveness of her sons; a croon ineffably pitiful, when she came upon the body of Abel; a longing for death before her time,—all these in their sequence, told of an anguish in Eve which only a heart which had suffered could have conceived. Her woe became immortalized in the sob of the rain, the moan of the sea, the wail of the wind,—and so it faded, faded from the ear of man.

Then at the end came again that faint, chaste motif of the heavenly choir, distant, indefinable, not to be traced to its source, but yet like a ray of hope towards which, howsoever blindly, despair could grope.

When the last dying note had sounded, the celestial theme was the thing that remained, as a fragrance—the last to linger in the heart and memory—and so it was done.

* * * * * * *

In the stillness which followed, a sound where a woman in the topmost gallery softly cried came distinctly. Weeping heart-brokenly, women still leaned forward in their seats, aware that Comanche was shaken with emotion he could not wholly repress.

Then, to conceal their wrought-up feelings, the men suddenly created a deafening uproar of applause, under cover of which the women sobbed and rose to their feet, half hysterically calling out their bravos and mopping their eyes, in order at all to behold the man whose art had so broken their hearts.

Wave on wave of tumultuous cheering, applauding, and cries of "Bravo!" reverberated through the house. On the floor and in the galleries men and women sprang to their feet with one accord. It seemed as if they would never cease, and that Gordon would never be permitted to bow his last acknowledgment of their tribute.

In the thunder of it all, with the spectacle of frenzied, crying people about him, he saw but one face and heard but one voice.

Genevra had risen, where she sat so near,—the sweet, impulsive Genevra he knew from that time so long ago, the same little girl at last, for whom he singly had played before, even as he had played his whole orchestra to-night.

And, as once in the dear past of dreams, she cried out, from her heart,—

"Oh, Roger! Oh, Roger!"

XIII

AFTER TWENTY-FOUR YEARS

WHEN everything else that is sweet on earth has been tasted, love will be found the sweetest of them all. Triumph, huzzas, emotions stirred, the guerdon of laurel thrust tumultuously upon his brow,—all sank to second place in the instant that Gordon realized that after all Genevra loved him.

The intoxication of success would pass, was passing now, but the joy of love was a wine that coursed through the veins forever. It was kind, it was splendid of fate, that he had been permitted to pluck the wreath bestowed for a great or a worthy achievement, but he thanked her most for Genevra's look and her one little cry.

That was all he had wanted. It was all that the time and the place had permitted. In the rush upon him of the friends entitled to overwhelm him then and there with extravagant congratulations he had seen Genevra but once. The joy in her eyes, as their look of understanding leaped across the intervening space, was an elixir to his heart even in the morning, after all the confusion had passed, like a dream of things incredible. Of his final escape from the hall, of all the partings, invitations, praises, and even of

his coming home, he had but a dim, confusing memory. Everything was unreal, save that look in Genevra's eyes and that note from her lips.

It was ended. He was exhausted, mentally and physically. He was sitting quietly in a chair, in his dressing-gown, leaning back passively and thinking it over. The papers lay beside him on the table, but as yet he had not so much as opened one. In a little heap near at hand were the letters which the post had brought him. He noted among them a long, heavy envelope, spotted with American stamps. He knew that it came from Doctor Pingle, but in his lassitude he took no immediate interest, even in this. Such a peace had stolen on his heart as he had not enjoyed for years. Genevra was found.

He wondered at last if his apparent success with his composition would prove a substantial thing. Had the praises influenced Genevra, with the others? He hoped not. He felt that this could not be so. His playing once, with one ancient tree-stump for a 'cello, with no one about to applaud him, had won her little heart-cry from her lips. Before even that, she had placed her hand confidingly in his. And later, how bravely she had come to save his life!

No, he could not believe she had cared so much for the praises bestowed by his audience. Yet the place he would occupy henceforth would be determined

in a measure by something more judicial than a chorus of bravos; wherefore, criticism yet held somewhat of the power of the determining vote.

He took up the paper that moulded opinions for London's upper classes. When he found two columns devoted to "Paradise Lost," he knew his laurels were secure.

"Not the least remarkable feature of this remarkable performance," he read, "was the extraordinary leading of this new composer. Herr Comanche exercised a wonderful power over every instrument. The veriest novice could not but feel that the leader was personally responsible for every tone, every note produced. By what magic he instilled into every performer such intensity of feeling it would be difficult to say. The man must possess a temperament not only of infinite depth and refinement, but also, of enormous dynamic force. A dozen times he drew his auditors half to their feet, so deeply did he make them feel the emotions which his music portrayed. . . . We are still too amazed to venture a word of criticism of the daringly original treatment which the whole great theme received. Not a canon of composition was violated, and yet not a canon was strictly obeyed, in Comanche's work. The man's genius is remarkable. In his fugues he awakens a thousand brain-cells of appreciation in the music-lover, which such a lover

never before was aware he possessed. . . . He ravishes the senses, so insidious are the beauties of his music of passion, but when he has told the tale of the 'wages of sin,' the woe that he voices is terrible. . . . We welcome a genius whose thought is at once profound, exquisitely poetical, and withal sublimely wholesome."

A scond paper was less dignified. "When 'Paradise' was 'lost' last night," it said, "there was nothing left for the women—and some of the men—to do but weep. By Jove! how did he do it? The man is a wizard. Personal magnetism had, no doubt, much to do with the ease with which he juggled with hearts and souls, but the music was unquestionably good. Perhaps it was more than good. It was startling, certainly, and of the vintage of exceptional inspiration. I was not prepared to see a man of so dark a countenance, even after the silly rumor that a certain lady, high in social circles, had made a *protégé* of an African. Herr Comanche is unmistakably of the Red-Indian lineage, which his name would indicate, and which his own confession renders certain. It is a matter of gratification, to me at least, that Comanche is not a negro. I have always maintained that the negro, howsoever diluted the strain may be by a nobler blood, is a cheap person, incapable of sublimity in anything so lofty as pure musical expression. Comanche's

music approaches, if it does not, indeed, attain, the sublime. His audacity—for such originality is positively audacious—is yet another indication of his ancestry. No noble red man was ever more untrammelled than this singularly forceful young man, who raised our hair last night, and might have scalped us with impunity in the trance in which he held us whensoever he listed."

Gordon found out things about himself and his work which he would never have so much as suspected, had the papers ignored him. He found himself dissected, mentally and morally; he found out exactly what influence the poet Milton had exercised upon his mind. One of the critics had the temerity to state how the composer's effects had been produced. His article, had it been but a trifle more definite, would have made an excellent guide to successful composition and the short-cut to fame.

He laid the papers down at last, satisfied, glutted, in fact, with praise. His work had created a genuine sensation. There are many things which are cloyingly sweet, but none more so than fulsome blandishment in printer's ink. Glad of anything, presently, to exercise a new line of thought, he opened his letters, reserving as ever the best for the last.

For the greater part, the dainty little envelopes contained invitations which must have been written after

his recital had ended. There was one from Lady Denby. "If not too weary, come to see me in the afternoon," she had written. "Perhaps we shall go for a drive, you and Genevra and I, for I think you need a bit of rest and sunshine after all your work. I shall look for you surely by three."

His heart turned over as his eyes beheld the name of Genevra penned upon the paper. He kissed the sheet and pressed it fervently against his cheek. He arose and walked the room excitedly. He could scarcely contain himself till three o'clock. At last! Genevra found at last! He could hardly believe it.

Fevered with all the mad thoughts in his brain,—of what he would say and what she would answer when they found each other alone,—he continued to pace the floor with that crushed letter in his hand.

Calm again, after a time, he opened what remained of his letters, coming thus upon the bulky missive addressed in the well-known chirography of Doctor Pingle.

The weight of the packet arrested his attention. He looked it over curiously. In the corner was written "Many happy returns." Then a something momentarily stopped his heart. His birthday—his twenty-fourth birthday—had passed him by three days before, and he had forgotten it utterly. Doctor Pingle

had sent him that bundle of documents left by his father,—the explanation of—everything!

A strange feeling of excitement, and almost of dread, came upon him. The unknown alarms so vaguely, so subtly. He had yearned to know what these papers contained, and now that he had them in his hands he almost feared to see them.

He had lived so many years without this knowledge of what he was, that his habit of life was to select what he himself preferred to be. He had known neither father nor mother; he had therefore fashioned himself only with the aid and sympathy of Doctor Pingle. His parents had abandoned their rights of guidance; he had assumed them all for himself. It seemed for a moment now as if some word of authority stepped in to claim him, after his own work and efforts had been crowned with achievement. And yet he had so wanted to know who and what he was,—to have the matter definitely settled in his mind. What line of the Indians was it by which he had come to possess a face so dark? This was a matter on which he had speculated so often that now the wonder of being placed in a position to know made him tremble with excitement.

He broke the package and drew forth the doctor's accompanying letter and the sealed envelope within.

"I send the enclosed in conformity with your wishes,

lad," he read, "and with a sense of awakening to the fact that you are now a man, and no longer the boy I sent away. You will read what your papers contain as a man of settled judgment, and for this I am glad. Judge as unharshly as you can, for you would never have been my own lad had not fate and motives not altogether explicable made you otherwise parentless at an age so tender."

The enclosed envelope was addressed in a writing he had never seen before to "Master Roger Gordon. In the trust of Doctor Pingle. To be kept until Master Gordon's twenty-fourth birthday, and then handed over to him to read."

With fingers not at all steady, Roger broke into the envelope and drew forth two papers, neither of them bulky. The first was commercial, a certificate of deposit, granted to a George Gordon, by a bank of San Francisco. The amount deposited was ten thousand dollars, which sum, with interest at four per cent. per annum, was, by agreement signed at the bottom, to be payable to Roger Gordon, on demand, at any time after his twenty-fourth birthday.

Roger read this through, not without emotion. Ten thousand dollars deposited to his credit twenty-four years ago meant a small fortune, awaiting his order. What manner of father had he been who could thus have provided for a child that might not live, and who

could then give that child away, abandon him utterly, and never more appear, either to see or to claim him?

He laid the sheet of paper upon the table, before him, staring at it dumbly. At length he remembered that the more explanatory document was still to be read. He opened it, folded back its creases and found it written in a strong, round hand, with an ink which had faded to a rusty brown. He read,—

"My dear little Son,—I am a weak man, and God forgive me that admits it, and you will often think the same of me and know I must have been a weak man, or I would never do what I am letting her make me do, and going away and leave you, little helpless son that I love so dearly. But I am fixing up my money so that you will have nearly all I have left now, and I hope it will do you more good than it did me, and this letter which will tell you these things which you may want to know and which you shall know, if you want to.

"I ran away with your mother from White Plains, New York, about nine months ago, or a little more, and we got married by the Justice of the Peace, and her name was Bertha Neuville, and she was so beautiful that she made me crazy, and she does it yet, and I can't help it; and that is why I can't help going away and leaving you with Doctor Pingle, because

she wants me to and says I must, and God forgive me, for I do love my little son. She ran away with me because her father opposed me coming to see her, and we heard that he died, and I think of a broken heart, which makes me sorry, indeed, for he was a good man and a proud gentleman, and he spoiled her and so did everybody else, so she was not very thoughtful of anybody else and wanted nice things all the time, and pretty words said to her which a man cannot help saying, for she is so beautiful.

"When we ran away we went everywhere, having a grand time and spending our money, all but what I have left you, my dear little baby boy, in the bank where you will get it some day, if you live to be a man of twenty-four years old, and I am fixing it that way so you will not be such a silly man as I have been, as I am only twenty-two, and I do not think any man gets his senses right till he is more than twenty-two or maybe more. So when we got here she was taken sick one day, and when I got the doctor, which was Doctor Pingle, she had a baby and it was you, and you had such a dark little face that she did not like it, and she said she wanted to go to Japan and China, so we are going to-morrow, and I would not go till I had put the money in the bank and left this letter, and I may come back and get you soon, as I love you so much, you poor little innocent baby, and

Doctor Pingle is a good man and he loves you already, and I know you will like him, and that's about all there is to it, except you may wish to know about me more some day.

"Your mother is a genuine American, but her father was French aristocratic descent, born in Boston, and was stock which came over with Lafayette, and her mother's parents were English, and boasted of noble blood, but their forefathers fought against the British forces good and hard, and that makes your mother pretty good American too, and she is of a proud family of beauties before her. And my father was named Donald Gordon and he came to America from Scotand, and he and his brother were rich before they came, and I was born in Virginia, July 11, 1850, and when the war broke out my father took me to New York City and left me there at school, and he gave up his property in Virginia for half its price and went to the war and fought with the Union forces under General Sturgis, and was shot in battle and died of his wounds in January, 1864, a good man and true; but perhaps he married my mother for more money. My mother's name was Dora Muller and her father was a German and a great musician, and he was rich and independent and lived alone, and no one went to see him often, and he did not care, and that was all my father told me about him, and

my mother was old Muller's daughter and she was a good woman and nice looking, though she died when I was ten, so I only remember a little about her. But she was almost as white as any one, and she was mulatto, but she——"

A cry, as if from sudden pain, escaped from Gordon's lips. He straightened rigidly in his seat. He tore open the collar of his dressing-gown and stared at the paper wildly.

"——almost as white as any one—mulatto!"

He sprang to his feet. He thrust the paper from him. His eyes were fixed upon it, glaringly. He was choking. It could not be true! The paper lied! His eyes deceived him! It was not really there. It couldn't be true!—it couldn't! He was Indian! He was anything but that! He had always been an Indian! he had chosen to be an Indian! Nobody—nobody had a right to make him anything else! It was false! He spurned it. The paper lied,—oh! it had to lie!—it couldn't be true!

He read it again. It refused to change. It mocked him—swept away all he had been by his boyish thought—branded him—sentenced him—tainted his blood and levelled his pride.

"Negro! negro!" cried something in his suddenly humiliated soul. He groaned and threw his hands behind his head and held them fiercely over both his

ears, then clutched his face about his eyes in a frenzy of blotting out their vision.

"Not that! Not that!" he cried at the paper on the table, and, suddenly descending upon it, he tore it to scraps and, casting them from him sank down in his chair and hid his face in passionate anger and shame.

XIV

POSTPONING THE JUDGMENT

THE laurels of all his achievement had been crushed to a shapeless, insignificant thing by the weight of his parentage suddenly fallen on Gordon's head. The utter abasement he felt was beyond the comprehension of any, save one who had nearly been lynched for a negro, who had suffered scorn and isolation his whole boyhood through, and who had chosen so passionately to be the descendant of a free, if savage, Indian.

Where he should hide his tell-tale face, how he could manage to hold up his head, and how conceal this shame were the problems that stared at him blankly from those scraps of paper on the floor. His gaze wandered listlessly about the room. There was his music-score, here was a heap of invitations; the one his work, the other results. Oh, the bitterness, the gall and acid of this stroke of fate, after all these years of his pride and spirit!

The world had believed him an Indian. Here he was, heralded forth a descendant of the noble Comanches, whose name he had chosen. And here was the slur cast as in all his life upon the African, thus always flung downward from man's high estate for the

chains that had bound him in the past. How far the black man fell Gordon knew too well. He was falling still himself. He had not yet begun even to clutch at anything to arrest that plunge in which he felt his pride go sweeping upward past him, like a rush of the wind. He had so abhorred the mere idea that he might have a drop of that serf-shamed blood in his veins that all that the negro might ever attain, in manhood and upward growth, left not the shadow of a mitigating thought in his mind.

But nobody need be told; this he suddenly realized. It made him start and grow hot. The torn and scattered document, that alone could apprise the world of the truth, lay there upon the floor, already half destroyed. He fell upon the pieces and gathered them up in his hands in feverish haste. He threw them guiltily into the grate and lighted a match to set them all ablaze.

Then something in his nature, yearning towards that father he had never known, arrested his gesture. He dropped the match, and taking out the scraps of paper, one by one, he fitted the pieces together, there on the floor, as he kneeled before the grate. The last words of his father's message, unfinished before, were presented to his gaze, and with a strange affection in his heart he read the lines:

"——mulatto, but she was educated to speak in three languages and she was gentle and good and was happy when she died, for she had been a real comfort to my father, and they were very fond of each other, as my father often told me.

"So it is my fault your little face is so dark, for your mother is very beautiful, and if she had not been petted so much by every one and told how pretty she was she would never let you go nor take me away from my little innocent son, and, God bless you! I shall always love you with all my heart, and I hope I shall come back to you soon, and my heart is torn in two pieces, but I cannot do anything, and O God, my little baby boy, I do hope you will forgive your father,

"GEORGE GORDON."

Roger sat there on the floor and read the whole paper again, from first to last. He could not destroy it. All the pent-up yearning of his heart, the yearning that for years had made him a sober, affectionate boy, reached forth to this tangible thing from his father and held it precious. It was something paternal at last,—something to prove that he had not been always without that spirit of hovering love and anxiety which none but an actual parent is given to feel.

He gathered the scraps in his hand, and carried

them back to the table. There he pasted the pieces one by one on a sheet of his blank score-paper, patching with infinite care where the fragments joined. Then he dressed himself and placed the paper in his pocket.

He was apparently calm at last, after the futile outburst against this thing. He could almost accept the truth that so blighted his heart, but he could not lift off the weight of the revelation. The worst was yet to come. He knew this, but his mind avoided the thought. Mentally he begged for time. It was too much to ask of any man that he should decide so soon between his love and his sense of right.

He could not see how he could tell Genevra of what he had learned. She had scorned that imputation years before, that negro blood ran in his veins. When she saved him from the lynchers that day she had called him an Indian. How could he bear to tell—the merciless truth!

On the other hand, he could not live a lie always. If ever he dared to make a woman his wife, the truth might take such a terrible way of appearing.

But he could not decide what to do—not yet. It was still so soon since Genevra had cried out to him just as once she had done so long before. His joy in that one little signal had been so brief. He had a right to see her once—she herself would expect no less.

He made these excuses as one who has walked confidently in the sunlight and suddenly feels himself tapped on the shoulder by a stern, forbidding presence which would say, "I arrest you, impostor,—come!" He could not comprehend at once that all he had been, all he had ever enjoyed, had suddenly vanished, to be known no more.

He knew he was begging the question. But a moment's respite was so little to ask. This thing had come so unexpectedly upon him! With the eyes of the world so turned in his direction, how could he abase himself at once?

Gordon had no sense of self-importance to sustain a thought that what he had managed to accomplish would put him through, regardless of what he was. He had once known the degradation of having been thought a negro.

XV

ROGER'S HOUR

THE world is filled with persons absorbed in the passion of standing where the light from greatness will fall upon them and model them out in relief, on the vast desolation of obscurity. Indeed, the next best thing to achieving celebrity is to know a celebrated individual and to let one's neighbors see that one knows him. A large number of men and women, distinguished after this manner, awaited Comanche's advent at Lady Denby's garden.

Her ladyship had intended something far more quiet and restful. She was helpless, however, since even unheard-of acquaintances had suddenly discovered that they owed her important social obligations, necessitating attention this very afternoon.

Roger came among them soberly. A few words, sincere and precious to his heart, were all he had time to hear from his hostess before the trial of the lionizing process was upon him. Grave by nature, rendered graver still by his recent discoveries as to who and what he was, he presented a rare study in modesty and wistfulness, in all that idolizing throng.

The reception amazed him. To have a score of

pretty women constantly clustered about him, hanging on his every word, begging him winningly, coquettishly, and even tearfully—to accept great armfuls of flowers, or to take to his heart the most extravagant of flatteries,—all this came to him oddly. He had thought the world would guess the dread truth of his parentage by the guilt in his eyes

He knew not what to do. From time to time his half-sad gaze went searching beyond the bank of faces for one truly comprehending glance, for which he felt his soul was aching. He saw her at last,—Genevra, standing apart from the others, waiting, rewarded to the full at last when his eyes exchanged their message with her own.

It lasted for a second only, this sweet communion. For the suddenly famous, fate turns her kaleidoscope with rapidity. New faces, new smiles, new bunches of roses played across his confused vision. But nothing could serve to obliterate that inner consciousness of who he was.

"Herr Comanche, you make me come to you," said the voice of Lady Denby, who at length thus politely chided the ladies. "I must really insist on your taking a cup of tea. You are tired, I know."

Embarrassed as he was for a lack of replies to make to acquaintances so swiftly and unaccountably acquired, Gordon was as glad to behold the face of his

hostess once again as a lion might be to discover the form of his keeper.

When he and her ladyship made their way out of the cluster of feminine admirers, he saw again where Genevra was standing alone, waiting in patience till he should come to her side.

"This is only a little of the penalty you will find yourself obliged to pay," imparted Lady Denby. "You do look exhausted, really. How tremendous it was!"

He heard as one who walks in his sleep. He could see only Genevra, with that light, so radiantly beautiful and tender, in her eyes. He came towards her slowly, every step an advance to a happiness ineffable. He felt he could hardly endure the wild and uncontrollable gladness in his heart.

Genevra put forth her hand and he took it. His face was earnest, his look nearly sad and yet so transcendentally illumined by what he felt in that second.

"I am so glad," she murmured, that only he should hear.

He could make no reply, and Genevra understood.

But brief as their second would have been at any ordinary function, it must needs be still further reduced. The ladies all developed a famishing thirst for tea. New arrivals, and those who had come to secure a front position, thronged about the tables and about Comanche once again, a pink and blue and white bou-

quet of animated loveliness in mull and silk, exhaling fragrance, lavishing glances, honeying all the air with the accents of compliment.

Roger looked his bewilderment. His expression served only to make him far more interesting to his self-appointed admirers. From time to time some naïve remark brought the dancing lights once more to his eyes; and then their succeeding melancholy broke the hearts of his sentimental idolators, in the semi-hysteria of their emotions.

Lady Denby found all her tact called in requisition when the time arrived to permit her guests to depart. When at length her carriage was ready, however, her adroitness was proved. She gave Herr Comanche in charge of Genevra, and sent them through the house together to meet her for a drive.

For one breathless second, when they found themselves alone, Genevra and Roger looked in one another's eyes.

She placed her hand in his as she had when a child, and walked thus a moment at his side.

XVI

GENEVRA'S THEME

THERE are days of such fragrant charm that it seems as if the heart would plunge the coldest reason into love's own mischief. It was such a day as this when Gordon found himself seated beside Genevra and facing Lady Denby, as the carriage rolled away to the near-by entrance of Hyde Park. The breath of trees and grass, so freshly beautified again, the fanning by of little zephyrs from Genevra's roses that filled her lap, the perfect luxury and comfort of the cushions about him, all created a semi-madness in Roger's being.

He felt himself guilty, thus to be taking these pleasures at Genevra's side. He was living a lie; he was not what she thought him; his smile when it answered hers was false. That she had the first right of any one in the world to know what he was, he conceded; that the courage to tell her would come he could not believe.

But the spirit of temporizing developed into something of defiance. Having sipped at this cup of delight, he must drink this once till he had all that the day could afford.

Rotten Row had never been more brilliant. A thou-

sand carriages, with their polished spokes tossing off a largess of glinting sunlight, seemed rolling on wheels of the sun's own gossamer. In texture soft as down, in greens, whites, pinks, and lavenders, hundreds and hundreds of beautiful women were driven by, many of them nodding and smiling as they passed. The tinkle of harness and silver chains seemed the music of this, the parade of beauty, wealth, and fashion.

"It far excelled my greatest hope," said Lady Denby, when at last they were well in the Row. "I feel as proud to-day as if I had done it all myself."

"Done what?" said Roger, whose thoughts were all confusion.

"Why, your great recital, innocent. There is no other topic."

"You are very kind to say so," Roger replied. The flush that rose to his face, visible under the clear bronze of his dark complexion, attested his genuine lack of guile.

"No; you must let me say it, Herr Comanche," her ladyship insisted. "It was really tremendous. I said that before. That's the word that expresses what I mean. The critics uphold me. Surely you must have seen the papers."

"I saw them, yes," he confessed. But his mind was filled with what he had learned from that other

paper now resting in his pocket. "They were certainly considerate."

"Not all," said Genevra, impulsively. "One had its fling first before it could make itself ready to tell the truth."

"Which one was that?" said Lady Denby. "I don't believe I saw anything of that sort, Genevra."

"Oh, it was nothing," said the girl, slightly flushing. "Something about Herr Comanche's name being Red-Indian. The criticism really gave him credit afterwards."

"Then Comanche is really the name of a North American Indian? How interesting!" said her ladyship, childishly pleased with this intelligence. "And who was the original Comanche? A chief, I suppose, or a mighty warrior of the prairies."

Both she and Genevra expected Roger to confess that his name was derived from some noble red ancestor, perhaps even famous in the Cooper of which all England is so inordinately fond.

He hesitated for a moment. "The name is applied to a great family, or tribe, of the Indians," he said. "Apaches, Comanches, Iroquois, Sioux, and many other nations make up the Indian population of the States. Comanche is merely a tribal name. My name, Lady Denby, is Gordon."

"But you are really partially Red-Indian," Genevra

said, eagerly. "The paper said something about your confession that you are."

Lady Denby looked at her, somewhat amazed. They had already overstepped the bounds of etiquette in making these personal observations. This was really shocking, even for the always impulsive Genevra.

"The papers—probably got hold of—what they said—from some of my fellow-students—my friends," said Roger. He knew this was simply evasion; he knew it added to the lie which, however unwittingly, he had lived so long. Genevra's eagerness to have him an Indian now seemed but the mature outcome of her hot little statement of years before concerning what he was.

His agony at this moment was supreme. He knew he would never dare, after this, to tell her the truth. Yet neither could he go on and permit her to place her hand in his again—permit what his heart so yearned for, to happen—while she believed that the terrible truth could not be true.

He had dared to look at her, sitting there beside him. Her eyes had returned his gaze, honestly, frankly, Her beauty had enthralled him. Now that heaven's own joy shone in her face, what a sweet caress it was that her warm gray eyes, so long-lashed and slumbrous, gave him from their depths. How living was the virginal fire that flamed in her cheeks! How ripely red

and full was her perfect mouth! He had never seen her so irresistibly winning.

"I have read that the Indian tribes of the States have endured many terrible wrongs," Genevra added, in a spirit of womanly sympathy. "You couldn't help writing music like that."

"Oh, Herr Comanche," said Lady Denby, glad to get back to the subject of the music, "I was so glad you put in that little touch of hope at the end. That was hope, wasn't it, really,—that bit at the end? It must have been hope. I don't know much about music, but I want that to be hope—I do really."

Gordon looked at her strangely, almost wildly. "How could we live without it?" he said.

Genevra comprehended at least a part of what his answer conveyed. She looked in his eyes fondly, while her ladyship's head was momentarily turned. She meant to convey to Roger a sweet assurance that never more need hopelessness bring him its anguish, for he had told her that evening when first they met again, that out of his dream of that boyhood meeting he had written his "Paradise Lost." He saw her look; his own eyes met it and caught it, till his heart was leaping in his breast.

"Oh! Herr Comanche," said Lady Denby, half excitedly, "the Duchess of Arran!"

Roger turned in time to raise his hat to the lady graciously bowing to them all as she passed.

"You shall meet her soon," Lady Denby added in a moment. "She was there last night, and came up to see me when it was over. She studied music, and even composition, for years. Really, last night was a triumph. Your fortune is made, Herr Comanche."

"And you won't be spoiled?" asked Genevra.

"I—don't know," said Roger, and the ladies laughed at his gravity.

There were no more returns to personal subjects. The flitting by of scores of titled and other important persons whom Lady Denby and Genevra knew, made anything but bowing and chating on the idlest of topics all but impossible.

The afternoon slipped away, with its wonderful sense of fragrance, its bewildering pageant of beauty and riches, its intoxicating charm. Gordon still postponed sentence on himself, and drank madly at the joy which he felt would slip so soon from his grasp.

It came to an end while the day was still a thing of surpassing loveliness. He made all manner of promises and social engagements, as one might answer in a dream.

When they stopped at last at Lady Denby's house, Genevra gave him both her hands, to assist her out of

the carriage. Her ladyship was engaged for a moment giving her orders to the coachman.

"Good-by, till we meet again—soon," said Genevra.

"Good-by," he said.

She hesitated a moment and then she asked, "Will you write something, some day, for—something that I would like?"

"Yes—I hope so," he answered. "And what shall it be?"

"I'd like it so much if you felt that you wanted—if you'd write a 'Paradise Regained.'" She was blushing, but she looked at him bravely. "Do you—think you can?"

He looked at her yearningly. "O God!" he groaned in his heart. To Genevra he only said, "I wish I could."

XVII

THE CHEER OF FELLOWSHIP

A MAN may endure a mountain of criticism who cannot endure a mole-hill of humiliation. Gordon was sickened at the thought of undergoing the consequences of having it known that his dark-bronze face was the advertisement of African blood. His soul revolted as he dwelt upon the subject. He had suffered so intensely, in his sensitive nature as a boy, for this same dark skin, that he could bear no more.

He could contemplate the anguish of saying farewell to Genevra forever with courage; he recoiled from the merest hint of telling her what he had learned. He knew that to see her again, and yet again, as he had to-day would be dastardly. But unless he told her and let her shrink from him, suddenly disillusionized, what course could he possibly adopt to prevent this present drifting, towards which his whole nature urged him so madly?

When he came to his room he found a score more of letters, brought by the post since his leaving early in the afternoon. They were invitations, tickets to various functions, and perfumed congratulations. Among the first that he opened was one from Lady Fitzhenry. She called him naughty, in having failed

to come to see her for several days, and more especially that day, after the homage she had paid him at his great recital. But he would come to luncheon the following day, and perhaps she should see him even sooner.

The man sat down with this note in his hand. He read it again, his thoughts beginning to focus on a possibility: He had only to permit himself to fall a little into the humor in which Lady Fitzhenry so insistently professed herself to be, to make Genevra believe him a worthless trifler.

Lady Fitzhenry, he was well aware, was amply able to take care of her heart. That she was merely amusing herself with a momentary flirtation he could have no doubt. She had begun somewhat boldly to take him into this species of favor at the earliest possible moment. So far as she knew, or apparently cared, he might be African, Hindoo, or Esquimau. He owed her nothing in the manner of a warning, no explanation as to who and what he was. A mild flirtation, or one that was not distinctly mild, would mean as little to her at the end as it would to him. But to Genevra it would mean all that his greatest enemy could possibly desire.

He loathed himself that the thought of a method so utterly unmanly should receive even a moment's serious consideration, but the shame of this was a

thing he could bear. He could advertise himself unworthy in any particular in which men so frequently fail to preserve the manhood with which they find themselves endowed, but he could not think of inviting back the mortifications he had formerly known.

There was no escape for him. It was merely a matter of choosing the manner of his agonies and shames. Through it all he was never tempted to deceive Genevra. Were her love a thousand times his for the asking, it could not bribe him to take her, under a pretence that one of his ancestors had been an American Indian. If the man's mind was morbid on the subject of what he had found himself to be, it had always been awed too greatly by his own sufferings to permit him to contribute to the same sort of punishment for another.

He could think of nothing so likely to work its bitter consequence as this possibility offered by the advances of Lady Fitzhenry. In his soul he cried out in despair at such a mockery of fate. But fate is as blind as justice and as deaf as death. He was banished from his Paradise; he must close its gates himself.

Having all but forgotten his weird *protégé* in the stress of the last twenty-four hours, he chided himself somewhat at last, and went to the room that was occupied by Fritz, where he found that faithful individual lying in bed.

Fritz was ill. He refused to confess to such a surrender as illness would argue, but Gordon could see through the little fellow's smile, as if maternally.

"Hullo, Colossus," he said, "what's up? You haven't been bawling yourself towards your grave again, you humbug?"

"I am all right. I am only tired," Fritz hastened to assure him. "I have been asleep, dreaming about the great work. I knew you would come. I mean, I was going to get up before you came."

Roger sat down on the bed and, pretending to push the pillow into a rounder wad of comfort, touched its surface. It was damp. He knew that Fritz had made himself ill by living the fathomless despair he had helped to express in "Paradise Lost." The things he had never attained himself in music, the limitations of his brain, which the comical little chap could never comprehend, and the strangely sensitive temperament that lurked in his misshapen body, all had plunged Colossus into similar outbursts of grief before, as Gordon was well aware. Sad music had the power to reduce his spirits to a fatal ebb. That the participation in the recital might produce this effect Roger had felt; but he had also known that to deny Fritz such a boon as that same participation would afford would have been to break the heart of this lonesome little being.

"I'd spank you for a pfennig," said Roger. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, lying here and never eating your meals."

"I forgot. I mean, I wasn't hungry—and I slept so long—and I dreamed so many nice things about you that I wouldn't wake up if I could. So I haven't been hungry. But I'll eat a hippopotamus if you want me to . . . I knew you'd come."

Gordon rang the bell, parted the curtains till the glory of the waning day illuminated the room, and began to sing a little German song which had cheered Colossus heretofore on similar occasions. To make him smile, forget, and hope was the only way to keep the rogue from pernicious illness. When the landlady appeared Roger ordered eggs, coffee, cold meat, bread, marmalade, a bottle of wine, and some apple-tart.

"I shall get up and prowl, if you wish it," said Fritz.

Roger knew Colossus was as weak as wet paper in this illness, come again upon him in a foreign land, and that he was quite unfitted to stand on his long slender legs.

"N-o," he said, as if after careful reflection, "stay where you are. It will keep you out of mischief. You might break the furniture, if I let you get up, after all you shall eat."

"Yes, I might break the house off," agreed Fritz, with a smile. "I have got so rested I am too hearty."

Roger went on with the singing, as he moved about the room, in his own peculiar "gayety" of spirits. He smoothed the wrinkles from Fritz's bed and then brought the basin of water, the soap, and a towel.

"Here, give me those hands, Colossus," he said. "With your bluster and brawn you'd shatter the dish."

He washed the two limp hands, so homely and freckled, dried them, and tucked them under the blankets. Then he bathed Fritz's face, all the while keeping up his raillery of scolding and joking.

When the dinner arrived he drew up a chair and a table, and, propping Colossus upright in the bed, proceeded gently to make him eat till the patient sank languidly back on his pillows.

"Do I have to eat any more?" asked Fritz, at length.

"More, Colossus?" said Gordon, in amazement. "Do you think yourself the Prussian army? And what have you left for me, as it is?"

Colossus smiled, as Roger let him lie again on his back. He had eaten as much as might have satisfied the mightiest kitten withal.

Putting aside the table, with its half-consumed dinner upon it, Gordon sang at his cheerful bit of a lay as he made the apartment tidy and opened the windows for the air to enter more freely.

"I've got some news as rich as plum-pudding," he said, "but I don't know, Fritz, whether you like to hear good news or not."

"Of course I do," said Fritz. "I could stand on my head all the time you were telling me good news."

"You stand on your back, flat, and I'll tell you. I had a letter from home this morning that tells me I've got a small fortune,—more money than I shall know what to do with. So you and I are going to have a fine time, and I'm going to see that you get a wife, and marry her straight away off and settle down to a life of usefulness and joy. Now that you can afford it, you must wed forthwith, and break no more of the ladies' hearts, you villanous Don Juan. And that's my news."

"Haw," said Fritz, grinning, somewhat wanly. "Me! Married!"

"Yes, married, you rogue,—married and presently surrounded by a lot of little Colossi. You've wasted enough of your life in riotous living. And now that we've got more gold that we can spend if we try, you shall live as befits your station. You shall have that same little villa you chose as a boy, and Gretel shall have you and her father both, and no pinching the breakfast to make it answer for luncheon as well. To-morrow, or next day, you spend your time in the park.

You will thereby get accustomed to living the out-of-door life you'll adopt at the Villa die Rosen, and one day next week we shall go there and buy the place together."

"I am glad you have got that money," said Colossus. "You will be happy yourself. And you will get married, yes. When I get up to-morrow I shall dance, to show you how I am glad."

Roger was trying with his news to brighten Fritz's spirit. He knew from previous experience how insidious and how enduring were these spells of melancholy which so swiftly reduced his companion's vitality and love of life. But instead of brightening, as he had thought he would at the promise of that certain little villa, with Gretel at last to make it glad, Fritz was dreaming sadly of his hollow life, when the might-have-beens were thus presented to his mind.

"You are a very devil for making me feel like a boy," said Roger. "I shall have to get my violin."

He hastened away to his rooms, and, fetching the instrument, lost no time in striking up a mad bizarro, in which it seemed as if the violin tossed off a sparkling champagne of song till the melody laughed at its own rollicking spree. As smiling as Gordon appeared to be, he was watching Colossus narrowly, anxiously. His playing became such a patter of fun that Fritz was presently won wholly away from himself and his

mood. His eyes became brighter, his feet were lightly kicking to the time, beneath the blankets of the bed.

It was almost an instinct that Gordon had for moods, that told him at last when Colossus was warmed and comforted sufficiently to be sent to sleep. His art was at its highest then, as he blended a rune of peace with his whimsical violin laughter, and gradually dropped out the fun till the muses sang a lullaby as soothing as the wind.

"Poor old Colossus. Good-night, and God bless you," he whispered at last to the sleeping Fritz; and stealing away to his own apartments, he dressed to return to Lady Denby's.

He had meditated telegraphing, to say that illness detained him. Then he thought it highly probable that Lady Fitzhenry would be among the guests that evening in attendance at her ladyship's musical party. Should he find her there, his "farce" could commence without further delay. He knew that his holiday was ended.

XVIII

THE FARCE COMMENCES

NEVER had singers, pianists, and the general herd of musical okapis so responded to an invitation as they did to Lady Denby's. It seemed as if the London jungle had delivered up everything it contained to do homage to the lion of the moment.

Confused by the introductions, the glitter, the clacking voices, that taught him soon how weary he was, after all his work and the big recital, Roger was nevertheless aware of two important factors of the gathering. Lady Fitzhenry was there, and so was Genevra.

Lennox and Lady Fitzhenry came up nearly together to greet him. He was glad to see his first violin, whose hand he shook heartily. Poor Lennox had almost feared to face the "black lion" he had done so much to create. Yet his treachery had never been committed, and the man was glad—immeasurably glad. Come what might, he had not been a Brutus to his friend.

"I knew you could do it, old chap," said Lennox. "I jolly well knew you only wanted the opportunity."

Roger had only time to thank him when Lady Fitzhenry addressed him.

"Big man," she said, smiling bewitchingly, "may

I approach and hover where your exalted shadow falls? May I sit at your feet, in humble admiration?"

"So many people have stepped on them, without asking permission, that I am almost flattered, Lady Fitzhenry," he said, laughing as best he could. "But it is the privilege of him that worketh to make himself one of many at the feet of beauty."

"Ah, sir, success has made you daring at last! Think how I so recently wrought with you, vainly, to get one wee compliment. Perhaps you can afford one now, out of your many that overwhelm you." She was archness itself, as she looked upon him with candid admiration. Moreover, she understood the art of manœuvring so that she held him all to herself against the eager throng. "But, seriously, Herr Comanche, you have chained us all with your music. You may drag us, willing slaves, where you will."

"On the contrary, I must be alert to avoid being myself dragged in twenty directions all at once," he told her.

"But you will come to me for luncheon to-morrow?" she hastened to say. "You have not accepted for luncheon in nineteen other directions?"

"No," he said; "but you are nearly as persuasive as a score yourself. Indeed, you must be all of twenty," he answered, still as if insisting in a joke. He was, however, fencing for time. He knew that to

carry out his farce he would do well to attend her luncheon, but he clung despairingly, for a moment more, to a hope that this concession to fate need not be made.

"Yes, prince of equivocators, I am twenty-two," she replied, fixing his gaze with her ardent eyes. "Now, will you answer me,—are you coming?"

"When I am dragged by twenty-two, I am powerless to refuse."

"Then I shall never be less again. Could a woman say more than that, Herr Comanche?"

"So much might depend on how much she was tempted," he answered.

"That is equivalent to charging that we would say almost anything to gain a point. You wouldn't charge us with that?"

"I would confess, under pressure, that women are born with facilities for speech."

"Yes; but this is a matter of conscience."

"Make sure that man would never have adopted a conscience had it not been convenient and readily kept in subjection," said Roger. "And woman gets what she has from man."

"Dear me!" said the lady, much amused. "Then perhaps I should renew my supply, you think? Could you spare me some of yours?"

"What you have at present is very becoming," he

assured her. "Conscience should never out-lustre a lady's—well—say her sense of humor."

"Nor a man's sense of flattery? Incorrigible demon," she said, tapping him lightly with her fan, "I shall leave you to the mercy of these less discriminating worshippers. Come back to me when you need to hear something conscientiously spoken."

She left him majestically. He could not but note, as she walked away, how superbly beautiful she was. Coiffure, face, shoulders, figure, and gown, she was splendidly handsome and richly endowed with life that bounded in her veins.

When some of the various performers and singers began to entertain the company, Gordon had more of an opportunity to move about. Yet one of the traits by which genuinely high society may be known is its habit of talking with renewed energy the moment that music of any character commences. Therefore Comanche presently found himself the victim of a group of antediluvians, who would have furnished Darwin with interesting material for study on the descent of man. Despite himself, as he answered these estimable ladies and smiled when they laughed,—a safe and amiable proceeding always,—he was looking about the crowded rooms for Genevra. The touch of her hand, the sound of her voice, the sweet warm light in her eyes, all remained with him, stirring his nature,

quickening the leap of his heart, and making of every moment that came an eternity of despondency.

She was not apparently to be seen in all that crush of people. He neglected to look towards the piano. When at length he heard a voice that sang out freshly above the Babel, with a sweetness, earnestness, and feeling that compelled his attention, he saw to his utter amazement, that Lady Denby had induced Genevra thus to entertain her guests.

For a second she glanced to where he was. The greeting of companionship flashed from her lustrous eyes across the distance between them. A flush that arose to mantle her cheek was a thing he felt more than saw. His love, suddenly insubordinate, flamed in his breast.

She was singing Lola's song from Cavalleria Rusticana—singing it passionately, as if the impulse of her nature demanded all that expression could give it. She was oblivious to everything in the rooms save the presence of Roger. She sang to him. He could not but know it, feel it. He had never known she could sing like this, with such a force, such ease, such temperament and culture.

The words were in English. She preferred them so. But instead of singing, "My king of lilies," to the metre, she sang, "My king of roses." She dared

to do it because no one could know—no one but herself and Roger, and even Roger would not perhaps realize what sweet abandon to and confession of her love it was. Yet the color that burned upward in her face, the first time the oft-repeated sentence came, remained on her cheek till the end. Moreover, it seemed to lend its virginal red as a color to her tones. They were rich, impassioned, and thrilling. The impulse of the moment had carried her quite away. But she was right: nobody knew save Roger and one other,—Lennox.

Comanche's first violin leaned against the wall dumbly, no longer capable of meditating a lover's revenge, no longer even jealous. The thing weighed upon him with a sense of inevitableness that crushed both spirit and hope at once.

But Gordon was the man who suffered. Genevra came and found him when her song was finished and some one was playing a tarantella on a violin. She was not so clever as Lady Fitzhenry, yet she managed to isolate him from the others for a moment.

"Miss Melgand has asked me to luncheon tomorrow," she said, "and I'm going to walk across the park."

"It is almost as good as the forest," he murmured, at loss for a better reply.

"Not like some forests,—full of music," she said,

slightly flushing. "But it is beautiful. I shall have a few moments there—all to myself."

His heart struck with heavy blows. The fire was dancing in his blood, in his brain.

"I—envy you that walk," he said.

She had planned for this moment; she had planned that walk—for their two selves. She could barely speak for the tumult of feelings that possessed her. She could not look up as she added, half in a whisper,—

"I know—Miss Melgand—wants to invite you—as well—to come."

He understood. He had guessed at the first mention of the park and the walk that her sweet sense of womanly provision had schemed for this moment, to which they should by every right feel entitled. His brain was reeling. He caught at himself in desperation, to prevent the outbreak of every natural impulse that strove for expression in his nature. If only he dared to tell her all,—but he knew he had not the courage.

"I am—very unfortunate,—I mean, I am too fortunate, I fear," he said, with a laugh that he forced. "I have already—accepted an invitation to lunch—with Lady Fitzhenry."

"Lady Fitzhenry!—to-morrow?" she said.

"To-morrow, yes."

"Oh! You are,—indeed, very fortunate," she said, faintly. "Lady Denby—must be looking for me. I must go—for a moment. Good-by."

He saw that her cheeks had suddenly paled a trifle. She turned away smiling, but without spirit or mirth, and went to her hostess through the throng. He knew the first of his poisoned darts had found its mark.

XIX

A PARTIAL INTOXICATION

THRICE ill at his heart, Gordon drove to Lady Fitzhenry's the following day. He was ill to think of Genevra and what she would naturally conclude from his conduct; he was ill for himself and his life, for which he could no longer care; he was ill over Fritz, whose malady had not diminished, but had rather increased, if weakness can be said so to progress. He had called in a doctor for the uncomplaining Colossus, but there was none he could call for himself,—for his heartache and anguish.

In the absence of any sign of visitors other than himself in front of Lady Fitzhenry's stately house, Roger thought he must have arrived far too early. By his watch, however, it was two, the hour her ladyship had appointed. He therefore rang and entered, to find that the reception-room contained no guests, as it had on the last occasion when he called. Before he had time to speculate on the subject, Lady Fitzhenry herself appeared and came towards him with her hand extended.

"My dear Herr Comanche, I am so delighted that you really did not forget," she said. "I trust you are quite as well as you look. It is such a grand day that

I have ordered the carriage. So let us go to luncheon at once. It will give us so much more time in the park."

"But, Lady Fitzhenry——" he started to say.

"Now, please, no protests, or anything of the sort," she interrupted. "Luncheon with me nearly always means a drive afterwards, and you know you accepted without conditions."

After all, why not?—as much driving as she pleased. The more he was seen in her company, the shorter would be the need of protracting his farce.

"I confess to a weakness for the park," he said, somewhat lamely. He followed where she led the way to a smaller dining-room than the one in which she had entertained before. Thus he found himself in a cosey little place into which the sun shone through interstices between the leaves of plants, trained to grow high on a swinging shelf, which was now across the window with its burden of greenery. The leaves made an unconventional design against the light. A sleek cat, curled like a muff, was asleep on one of the many cushions with which the window-seat was provided. The apartment was one in which luxury and beauty of adornment and furnishing had been lavished with taste and without regard to expense.

For a moment they were alone in this pretty bower

of delight. Then a door opened and a little emaciated woman appeared. Lady Fitzhenry turned to her, handing her one of Comanche's cards.

"Herr Comanche, the Baroness Skeffingham," she said.

Gordon bowed and mentioned the pleasure he felt, but the lady, after a peculiar little nod, merely trotted to a seat at the table and made ready to dine. Roger must have looked somewhat of the astonishment he felt, for Lady Fitzhenry said, in gay badinage,—

"She is practically stone deaf, and she doesn't see very well.

"How—how very unhappy," said Roger.

"Not at all, my dear Herr Comanche, for you know, even with you, one must have a chaperon."

He had been amazed to find that he was to lunch with Lady Fitzhenry alone; her frankness completed his surprise. But she smiled at him engagingly. As pink and as fragrant as the roses that beautified the table so profusely, as warm as the cat asleep on the cushion, and as bright as the rays of the sun shining in, she impressed him with a new description of beauty. With her shoulders and arms merely suggested, instead of being revealed, as in evening dress, she drew his gaze only to her face, which he found almost faultless in its lines of feminine loveliness. Her hair was glossy, light, and abundant. Her eye-

brows were intensely black. Her eyes were brown. With color that came and went, dimples that played with only the slightest assistance, and a red mouth, as sensuous as it was ready with smiles, she made a picture on which it was possible to gaze for long without becoming sated. Her gown was pretty in twenty ways of such creations. It had not been made in London. Parisian witchery seemed woven in the very fabric of its costly material.

"You have a very beautiful home," said Roger, in honest admiration of the room. "I wonder if there is anything left that your heart could wish."

He thought he was making a commonplace remark; it had, however, no commonplace reception.

"My poor heart is the one thing which has not had its wish," she answered, smiling straight into his eyes. "Are you a palmist, or any sort of a soothsayer, Herr Comanche?"

"Alas, I fear I am not. Why do you ask?"

"I thought you, of all men, could tell me whether my heart will ever have its wish or not," she murmured.

Her meaning was too obvious to be missed. Roger colored boyishly. He said,—

"You have a rare heart, indeed, if it really knows what it wants."

"Why, I thought every one knew what a woman's

heart most craves to possess," she told him, with affected innocence.

"I must plead a woful ignorance," was his answer. "Perhaps, however, you will enlighten my wretched mind. What would you say it is that a woman's heart so fondly desires?"

"Well—we all—every one of us—wish first to—to be loved. Every woman craves that most."

"Every woman—all women," Roger repeated, attempting to extricate himself somewhat from a position which he conceived to verge on the perilous. "This is a great burden of information for any one man to assume. I shall feel it my duty to impart this knowledge to all my kind."

"If you find one of the men apparently eager to avoid this truth, or irresponsivee to all that it ought to convey, what shall you think of his temperament?" she inquired.

Roger colored again, with the consciousness that she was whipping himself, thus artfully, over the shoulders of some imaginary man. He looked for a second into her eyes. They flashed him a glance as warm as June.

"I should always go deeper than mere appearances before I form a judgment," he responded. "We used to say one could never tell from the look of a frog how far he could jump—if he wished."

"From a woman's point of view, would you construe that hopefully?" she inquired, with evident interest. Had she asked him straightforwardly whether she could hope for love from himself, he could not have felt more cornered. This farce of making love to her ladyship was moving with a swiftness that alarmed him. He had never been frivolous-minded; he had never gone so lightly along the path of life as to blow about with every breath of the zephyrs. He could not readily put on the motley, either of a mild flirtation or a game at deeper passion.

"I should never dare attempt to construe anything from a woman's point of view," he answered, as gayly as possible. "Is it the Bible that bids us beware of building a house on the shifting sands of a feminine point of view?"

"I only know that the Bible doesn't counsel any one to build behind the stone of a man's blindness," she retorted, a little warmly.

Gordon confessed to himself that there are none so blind as those who will not see, but he made no admissions. A score of times he was tempted to utter some word of reckless passion. To abandon himself to the mood in which he found his beautiful companion would have been so dangerously easy, and yet he found it so difficult.

"Ah, poor blind man," he sighed, lugubriously.

Lady Fitzhenry mentally acknowledged his cleverness, and liked him the more.

"Poor, pitiful man, indeed," she agreed. "Are you going to refuse the wine again to-day?"

"I am more than half intoxicated now," Roger assured her. "And there is still the drive in the park."

A mad thought that wine and Lady Fitzhenry could bring him a species of delight, in which something approximating oblivion would result, was in his brain. He was weary of fighting to drive it out. Why should he so exert himself? But the habit of his life had been honest, abstemious living. It opposed its natural barrier to madness now. Yet he felt that perhaps the day would come when the pall of his anguish would obliterate all habits that formerly governed his existence. He almost hoped this might be so. Nothing so rankled in his soul as that one bitter irony which Genevra had spoken so unwittingly when she asked him to write a "Paradise Regained." Could the wine but wipe that out, he thought he should hail it as a boon.

The luncheon came to an end at last. Without a sign, the little Baroness Skeffingham arose and disappeared with Lady Fitzhenry. They were both soon ready for the drive, and the chaperon appeared to know her place in the carriage from experience. She

sat on the forward seat and folded her hands demurely.

Roger and Lady Fitzhenry sat together in the cushions and robes, in a space which he found was not as wide as usual. Up through a fashionable street the carriage rolled, to Hyde Park Corner, and here, with dozens of smart conveyances, it glided under the archway of stone and into the Row, with its tide of glinting vehicles and spirited horses.

Her ladyship chatted in her brightest, most animated style; she nodded to right and left, at scores of London's patricians. Half intoxicated, as he said, Gordon felt his spirit of recklessness growing upon him.

But at length they passed a carriage in which he saw a girl with a white, set face. She nodded so coldly that it brought all of his gall and wormwood back, to make him sober.

The carriage was occupied only by Miss Melgand and Genevra.

XX

COLOSSUS NO LONGER A JOKE

As a result of what she called a secondary thought, which is always one way of disguising deliberate calculation, Lady Fitzhenry drove Herr Comanche to the home of one of her friends. The Dowager Duchess Farnham, whom this personage proved to be, appeared to Gordon to be quite prepared for the visit. Indeed, she expected Herr Comanche and Lady Fitzhenry not only to have some tea, but to remain for supper as well.

The reason for desiring so much of his company was finally rendered comprehensible to Roger. The Duchess had written an opera, which she much desired should be set to music forthwith. Her work was not new. Comanche was not the first musical genius who had thus been honored by the dowager. Her voluminous libretto already enjoyed something akin to fame, signified at times when some man who knew of it nudged another of his sex and said, "I see you have undergone a reading. What will you drink?"

Lady Fitzhenry had not permitted Herr Comanche to hear the work on this occasion. She knew too much to let him think her friends the sort to be avoided, and herself, therefore, indiscriminating. But the dow-

ager was one of those persons who create a wonderful first impression; moreover, her suppers were famously charming. Lady Fitzhenry was satisfied when the impression and the supper had worked a vague background of possibilities for her own fair charms and thoughtfulness to shine upon. This succeeded so well that the guileless Roger had a moment of splendid dreams before his indifference to further success returned to blight all his hopes and desires.

When he let himself in at the quaint little house where he lived, he met the housekeeper coming down the stairs.

"Your friend is restin' splendid," she said. "He's been quiet all the evenin'."

"Asleep?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Have you heard him breathing a little?"

"Oh, no, indeed, sir."

"Thank you," Gordon murmured, and he hastened up to the floor above without delay. The look of worry which had come on his face had escaped the woman's observation. He knew too well what it meant to have Colossus lying apparently asleep and making no sound.

He unlocked his own apartments first, purposely making a noise. Then he went to Fritz's room, entered, and lighted the gas.

As he quite expected, Fritz's two round eyes were open wide, and the little fellow's face was wreathed in smiles the moment the light fell upon his features.

"I knew you would come," he said, a little faintly. "I've been waiting. I couldn't go to sleep without saying—good-night."

"I'd wollop you good if you did," said Roger, with a poor imitation of fun in his voice. "I meant to come home a little earlier to-day."

"I think I could have waited till pretty near morning," Colossus told him, wistfully, as Roger sat down on the edge of the bed. "But I did want to say good-by."

"Good-by?" Roger echoed, scolding tenderly. "Don't you talk to me of saying good-by, you big, burly humbug, Colossus. That's perfect nonsense! I'm going to get you out of here. I'm going to make you laugh till the rest of your hair falls off your head."

"I'm laughing now," said Fritz, weakly, striving to keep his lip from trembling. "You always make me happy. That's why I wanted to see you when you came back. You don't mind, much, all the trouble I've been?"

"Fritz—don't you talk this sort of thing to me," Roger chided, in the way that usually made Colossus

brighter. "You promised to get up to-morrow, and help me to have a good time."

"You've always made me happy when no one else cared," said Fritz, looking up with a yearning affection on his homely face. "I don't know why you did. I couldn't play, and I couldn't write music, and I think I must have been pretty near a failure."

"You weren't anything like a failure, Colossus. You know more about music than hundreds of the fellows," Roger told him, earnestly. "So you brace up and don't talk all this foolishness. I'm going to get you well, and you'll do something yet."

"Yes, I'll do something," Fritz echoed, smiling wanly. "I used to think of wonderful music that I'd like to write, but couldn't, and beautiful playing that I could never play, but——"

"Then you've got to make up your mind you'll do it all yet," Roger interrupted. "We'll make you a genius—we can, if only you'll laugh more, and get yourself well and strong."

"I've tried to laugh—at everything. My life has been a joke," Fritz told him, trying to smile as he talked in his wavering voice. "But you don't think it was all like that? I helped a little on your great work. I helped you finish it up, and you let me play." He turned his head to one side, in his old way, and looked at Roger hungrily, anxiously.

"You helped me when I needed it most," said Roger, whose voice broke, despite his efforts to speak in an off-hand tone. "You were the only man I knew who could do the work I wanted. But now I want you to get back your strength for more good work."

"I helped a little," Fritz repeated, in his failing joy. "I'm glad I came home to you again. I waited for you to come. I wanted to ask you if I was only a joke, before I said good-by."

Roger could have groaned. He dared not reveal the slightest feeling that would add to Fritz's depression, but to jest had suddenly become impossible.

"I'll not permit you to say good-by, or anything of the sort, Colossus," he said. "Your success is just coming to you now. You scamp, I want you for my partner."

"I haven't done much all my life," Colossus said, feebly, "but I helped you finish the great work."

Gordon saw how useless it was to rally the weary Colossus with fun. He had one resource left.

"But you have got to help me with more of the music," he insisted. "It is only begun—only half has been written. I shall need you to help me write the other half,—the 'Paradise Regained.'"

"'Paradise Regained,'" echoed Fritz. "You see you have the beautiful thoughts, and I never had. I'd spoil it, I know. I'd never make anybody feel—that

way. Nobody will ever like what you write more than I do. But you can write it—so much better—without —me."

"I can't," said Roger. "You make me light-hearted —joyous. I want you to help. I need you to help. You have got to get well and help me, Colossus."

"I'm so—glad you—don't think—I'm all—a joke," Colossus faltered. He winked his eyes slowly. His affectionate gaze rested on Gordon's countenance a moment. Then he turned face downward and lay in absolute quiet on the pillow.

"Here, Colossus, you humbug," said Roger, wrenching at his collar, that choked him, "you look up here —and laugh. I'll get my violin. I'll play." He hastened from the room. Violin in hand he darted down the stairs to his housekeeper's room.

"Will you go at once and get the doctor to come again?" he said. "And tell him to bring something strong." Then he hastened back to the room above.

"Fritz," he coaxed, "look up here and tell me what to play."

Colossus looked up, obediently, his head on one side in his quaint little way. His eyes were strangely wistful, even for him.

"I'd rather hear you talk," he whispered. "Will you let me lie against your arm—just for a moment— before the doctor comes."

Roger looked at him, startled. He could not demand to know how Fritz knew.

Kneeling on the floor, he adjusted the little fellow's head on his arm and saw the light of fleeting joy that illumined the homely face.

"My—home," faltered Colossus. "I could have waited—longer; but I am—so glad—you—came."

One of his thin white hands crept slowly up to Gordon's shoulder and hung there, though it trembled. With that wistful turn of his head to the side, Fritz looked at Roger and smiled. A light ineffable burned in his eyes, unsteadily. He closed them as if to sleep.

"I—helped," he sighed, in content.

Then the wan hand slipped down from the place to which it had climbed. There was one more faint breath. That was all.

Roger remained there kneeling. He was silent. He made no movement. He could not believe that the one faithful being who had clung to him with such a genuine affection had really gone.

He touched the cool forehead with his hand and looked long and yearningly at the white face, so transfigured at last. At length he laid the freckled cheek on the pillow and arose. The majesty of death was already coming. The smile took on a beauty that can never come till the final touch of divinity smoothes away all that is earthly from a face.

XXI

THE WAY OF A MAN

SENSIBLE that he owed an obligation to the friends who had made his recital possible, Gordon knew his social existence could not be ended so abruptly as his soreness of heart would dictate. Nevertheless, it was fully a week after Fritz's death before he again appeared at Lady Denby's house.

The weather had suddenly developed towards summer heat. Exodus from town was already the topic of conversation. Indeed, the stirrings of preparation for the social flitting to river-side and sea-shore were everywhere to be heard. Roger was glad this was so. He wished to get away from London. The heat formed an acceptable excuse. But where he would go he had not thought. Vaguely he considered the Continent as a haven to which to return.

It was an evening party again which had brought together a number of Lady Denby's acquaintances.

"You extravagant boy," said Lady Denby herself, when she had greeted Comanche in all her cordial spirit, "you have expended enough regrets to last one a lifetime in declining so often to be seen. Do you know that you deserve to have lost the several opportunities to write music for important persons, which

I have preserved? You do, really. And this may be the last of my evenings. I can tell you that when every one leaves the town, all seriousness and thought of work are placed in storage. You must really see some of these music-searching friends without delay."

"You are more kind than I deserve, I admit," said Roger. "I wrote you a little about the friend I had lost. But sometimes there are things which one cannot bury—much better as such a ceremony might prove to be. I thank you for thus forgiving me so promptly."

"But I haven't said I forgive you at all, Herr Comanche," she protested.

"And you will not say you have not," he answered.

"I do forgive you," she told him, sincerely. "I could wish you looked as happy as you did the night we met you first."

"I must do so, or prove myself an ingrate," he agreed, smiling at her gravely.

"You are never that," she told him, glancing past him to where some new arrivals were approaching. "Now say some nice things to my guests. You remember meeting Viscount Farron, Herr Comanche?"

She glided away to meet the friends who had just arrived, and Roger nodded to a man he remembered to have seen before. This bewhiskered person bobbed his head in return.

"The weather has turned much warmer," said Gordon.

"Bally warm weather for golf," replied the viscount, bow, "you are a cruel as well as a wicked man."

"Herr Comanche," said a pleasant voice at his elbow, "you are a cruel, as well as a wicked man."

He turned about and saw the bare arms and shoulders and the beautiful neck and hair and face of Lady Fitzhenry. On her damask cheek flamed a color more warm that that of the roses she wore at the top of her corsage, where they rested against the creamy whiteness of her bosom.

"I have to be all that you say," Roger said, "to keep fresh the interest which I may thereby excite."

"Then you admit, shamelessly, that it has been deliberate cruelty that kept you from coming to see me?"

"I confess I have been cruel to myself."

"Oh! Then I cannot forgive you, after all," she told him. "To break my heart might be excusable, but to pain my friends is a deadly sin. You didn't really wish to come?"

"My wishes have never been conspicuously well received by fate," he answered, equivocally.

"That is not an answer. You did not really wish to see me."

"You do yourself an injustice," he assured her. "But had I seen you a hundred times, you would not

have appeared to greater advantage than you do to-night."

She looked at him out of her soft brown eyes caressingly. "I wish I might believe you," she murmured.

"Oh, you may," was his cheerful answer, for he had meant far less than might have been supposed.

"I will if you will take me for something cool," she answered, and, slipping her hand beneath his arm so far that it lay upon his wrist, she guided him away from the room.

Despite himself, he felt the fascination which this beautiful young widow exercised, when she so desired, for any man. She was always so fragrant, so bright, so voluptuously radiant. Temptations to drift with her whither she listed had become more natural and more insidious. Yet he found himself looking restlessly, yearningly about for one sweet face, the memory of which, in its whiteness, haunted him day and night. She was not to be seen. She was there, however, jealously watching the movements of Lady Fitzhenry.

To think at all of Genevra made Gordon's heart ache dully. He knew, as he searched the faces there, that the time had come when he must leave the scenes in which he beheld her from time to time. His farce, so far as it had gone, had wrung him till his heart was weary of the thought of courage.

"Oh, why didn't I think before?" said Lady Fitzhenry. "The conservatory is the most delightfully cooling place in the house."

She opened a door that led to the house of glass, and took him away from the sound of the chatter, with easy art. The perfume of leaves and blossoms, the plash of a tiny fountain, and the sense of calm made the place delightful. A rustling movement, in the ferns on the farther side, escaped their attention.

"This is where your charity begins," said Roger, referring to her thoughtfulness in conducting him into such a peaceful bower.

"And charity should never end," she told him, as they came to a rustic bench, in which she sat, and drew him to a place beside her. "I could tell you the name of a king who sat here once."

"Indeed? Then I must make this seat an inch higher at once, or refuse to sit here longer."

"And he broke a lady's heart," she added.

"Ah, well," he answered, "a king can do no wrong. And I have found that a duke can do but about a fifth of a wrong, a marquis only about two-fifths of a wrong, an earl about a third of a wrong, a baron less than half of one, and even a capitalist less than a whole wrong. It is only the plain, poor citizen who can commit a whole wrong in this world."

"But it is more than a wrong, it is a sacrilege, to

break a lady's heart," she answered. "And even a king could commit a sacrilege."

"I believe a few have tried the experiment," he said.

"But the man who wouldn't break a woman's heart is the true king after all," she told him, looking in his eyes candidly.

"And they say something about 'uneasy is the head that wears a crown,'" Roger replied, with an indifference he found it hard to assume.

"Then—wouldn't you care to—be a king of that sort?"

"So many zealots might desire my abdication," he answered, guardedly.

"But no one could make you abdicate, if a woman's heart were your throne."

"Thrones and women's hearts have much in common, I agree," said Roger. "I wonder if all thrones are as hard as this bench."

"They are soft enough when they are women's hearts," she murmured. "I should think you would like to—to try one."

"I should never feel sure I knew what sort I want —these days," he told her, without revealing the emotion she had stirred within him.

"But if you married some woman who could help you—who liked you very much, and who had the

means, so that you could do your great work at ease—— It might be some advantage if she had a little money and—could make you happy, or—wouldn't you wish to marry?"

He looked at her, only for a second. Her eyes were ablaze with a passionate light; her cheeks were flushed, as if with the consciousness of their own warm beauty; her bosom moved rapidly, as she caught her breath through her red, parted lips.

Roger was half intoxicated in that one second. She infatuated all his senses for the moment. A madness was in his brain, but he gripped himself, as if by habit.

"A woman—is so hard to please, according to some one," he said, huskily. "He would be a bold man who felt sure that——" and he left it unfinished.

"Sure that a woman—loved him?" she supplied, in excitement only half concealed. "Oh, but you should know—the signs. Have you ever played 'She loves me; she loves me not'? Here, take one of these roses —and play it."

She leaned towards him so that the roses fastened to her corsage were presented to him irresistibly. They trembled, as if to the thrill which surged through him, racing with the blood that leaped in his veins. For a second, deprived of the power to think, he raised his hands to one of the buds that was touching her

bosom. His fingers shook. Why not? Why should he not?

"Oh, there is a pin!" she gasped, and suddenly catching his hand in hers, as if the pin were hurting, she pressed it, with roses and all, against her cool, soft flesh which instantly heated beneath the contact of his touch.

His senses reeled. He felt he should clasp her in both his arms, kiss her—on her lips, her shoulders, crush her, so fragrant and velvet soft she was.

Then strangely it seemed as if something in his heart cried out in pain.

"I am sorry—you were hurt," he stammered, thickly. "I was awkward. I'll go and open the door for air."

He had extricated his hand from hers with one strong movement. He arose at once, unsteadily but doggedly.

"Don't go—not for a moment," she gasped. "I can't——

"I know—the heat," he said, master of himself again in a flash. "I hope you will not faint. I'll open the door. I'll ask Lady Denby to bring you her salts."

She had started to her feet, to restrain him. But, as if in great solicitude for her health, he strode away. She sank on the bench, breathing like a spent doe.

Gordon, who had no intention of calling Lady Denby



into requisition, went swiftly to the door that led to the garden. Somewhat to his surprise he found it already open. He went out.

A faint sound, as of some one crying, attracted his notice at once. He peered through the weakened light cast in the garden from the windows, and saw the figure of a girl, who was leaning against a tree and softly sobbing.

XXII

FOUND

He knew who it was. He knew she had heard,—how much could make but little difference. Now that the all he had started out to do was accomplished, he broke down in all his resolution.

"God help me! I can't endure it any longer!" he cried to himself, in anguish, and going down from the low veranda he stood in the grass and wrung his hands in silence.

"Oh, Roger," came in a little cry to his ears.

He thought she had called him. She had not. She had only breathed his name, while she threw herself against the tree and buried her face in the curve of her arm.

"Genevra—I'll tell you—I'll tell you everything," he said, as he went towards her with his hands pressed painfully against his breast.

She turned about instantly and faced him. She caught at the tree and held herself away from it as she looked at him, wildly.

"Go away. I don't wish to see you. I hate you!" she said, in a voice still shaken. "You can have her. I wish you would leave me—at once!"

"I'll tell you," he repeated, simply. "I don't

care, now. I'd rather tell you and let you hate me more."

"I don't wish to listen. I don't wish to see you. You've no right to come here," said Genevra, still clinging to the tree for support. "I don't care for anything about you. I—never cared—never!" She stamped her foot in anger. "Leave me—directly!" she commanded.

"I am glad you have never cared," he said, in his melancholy calm. "But I cared—so much I couldn't tell you—couldn't bear to have you know that I'm—that I'm not an Indian."

"I don't know what you mean," she said. "I don't want you to tell me anything. Why should I care to hear anything about you—and Lady Fitzhenry? I wish to be—alone."

"I knew you would, as soon as you knew about me," he told her. "I was too big a coward to tell you before, and to go away, but now I want you to know it all. I don't care anything about Lady Fitzhenry, but I couldn't bear to tell you the truth before."

"Perhaps you are breaking her heart, as you broke —I don't wish to speak to you again. Why don't you go away?"

She had turned about to face him, with her shoulder to the tree. She was trying to stifle her pent-up emo-

tions and to dash away her tears with her handkerchief.

"I am going—now that I've told you what I am—an octoroon," he said. He hesitated for a moment and then added: "Good-by."

He turned, as she made no reply, and started away.

"Roger—Mr. Gordon," she said, "you—I have a right to know what you mean."

He came back, still clutching one of his hands in the other and gripping it till it ached.

"I have told you all there is to tell," he said. "I found out who I am, and why my face is dark, the morning after the recital. I am not part Indian, as you have always thought. It is worse than that." He hesitated for a moment, and gazed at her wistfully out of his brilliant, mournful eyes. "I was cursed, I was sickened, all my boyhood through, by my darkened face," he continued, unflinchingly; "but the darkness came because my father's mother was—mulatto. I couldn't bear to tell this—to you. I knew you would scorn me. But it is better as it is. I'll go, for that is all there is to say."

"No, it isn't," she answered, almost impatiently. "I don't care anything about all that. But you!—the things you have done! I didn't think you could treat me so—after all that you knew—after everything. That is what I want explained."

"I have confessed I was too great a coward to let you know what I am," Roger repeated, patiently. "I could not bear to have you know and turn away from me—for that. I have been a greater coward in what I have done. I tried to make you think me unworthy—and you see how well I succeeded."

"Do you mean you have done these things to make me despise you?"

"That is a harsh way to say it—yes."

"I—don't see how you could," she said, brokenly, and turned with her face again to the tree.

Gordon was terribly wrung. He came closer to where she was.

"I thought—it would fall on me," he said. "It was all because I loved you so—because I have loved you so long, so wholly."

"You!—love!" she laughed, in a paroxysm of crying. The sound was dreadful. "If I could only hate you!—if I could—if I could! I do!—and I wish—you'd go away—and—leave me—now!"

"I'll go," he answered, still patiently. "But I have loved you—beter than life—all these years. Won't you say—good-by?"

"If you loved me you would have trusted me completely; you would have known I shouldn't care for anything but what you are to me," she said, less in anger. "You haven't told me the truth."

"Oh, Genevra, send me away," he begged. "I have told you everything—more than I thought I could tell to any one. I have told you because I love you—love you more than happiness, or pride, or life. Please believe that—only believe that—and I can go."

She was silent for a moment. His words, in all their poignancy, had gone deep into her heart.

"If you—wish to leave me, Roger,—go," she faltered, and looking at him fondly, with the tears still in her eyes, she held out her hand.

He knew at last that he could not go.

"You do not care—for what I am?" he said. And the answer in her eyes was all his heart could wish.

Almost overcome, he took her in his arms and held her gently to his breast. His lips trembled, but he could not speak. She clung to him, shaken convulsively, weakened by the tumult of reaction and happiness suddenly come upon her.

"Oh, Roger, oh, Roger," was all she could murmur as she lay against his shoulder.

He kissed her on the lips, and she laughed and cried together. He kissed her hands and her hair, and crooned her name till she felt all the sadness in his nature laid bare at last, when this joy came to open wide his heart. It was almost terrible to feel, as she did, what his sensitive nature had suffered. A thousand days of protestations could not have borne

in the truth of his love at this one brief moment of mingled pain and ecstasy was doing now.

"Oh, Roger, my own darling Roger," she whispered at last, "I am sorry, dear, for all I said. How could I know? My heart was breaking. Had you really gone, my heart would have stopped its beating."

He looked in her eyes. Such fathomless depths of emotion as she saw in his gaze filled her soul with awe of the sacredness of love.

"It is terrible to love any one as I love you, Genevra," he told her presently. "I love you more than my hope of heaven and—God forgive me—more than God Himself."

She nestled to him. "I am so glad. My Roger," she answered.

From the open windows came sounds of music. Then they heard the voice of Lady Denby.

"Genevra, where are you, child?" called her ladyship.

Genevra held up her lips and Roger kissed her once again. She tucked her little hand in his and they started together for the house.

Near the door of the open conservatory Lady Fitzhenry glided away to the cover of a shadow, and with anger and scorn in her blazing eyes watched the pair as they entered with their hostess.

XXIII

ROGER'S ADVOCATE

GENEVRA'S father considered that he best performed the functions of a mother to his otherwise motherless girl when he exercised his privilege of consenting to whatsoever she very much desired. If her mother had lived, he argued, the two of them together would have inveigled all manner of consents from him anyway, wherefore his mind should always be made up as if the mother and bairn had worked their will upon it.

Impulsive as he knew Genevra to be, he had never yet had occasion to regret his complaisance with her moods. He loved her dearly and trusted her implicitly. Fortunately, he told himself, she had never desired to do anything unwholesome or indiscreet. He was waiting for that day to come in which she would tell him she had chosen a mate, with all the patience he would have expended on any microscopic subject. That such a day had not yet arrived seemed to him, when he thought upon it, rather peculiar. Genevra was a beautiful child, and she was clever, good, and honest.

They had moved up to Datchet, on the Thames, for the summer. He was carefully rearranging his microscopes and their attendant paraphernalia in one of the

sunny rooms that faced the river when Genevra came in upon him. She was flushed with the happiness of youth and love; she must needs run across the room to where he was, to express her mood of liveliness. She kissed him on top of his head, then on the cheeks, and then on the lips.

"That's the sign of the four," she said.

"Yes. I thought it was coming the moment you entered the room, my dear," he said, as he pushed his glasses up on his forehead and gripped the lower part of his smooth-shaven face in his big, freckled hand. "So you want my consent to something you deem important."

"You shall be deemster yourself," she said, tossing up a handful of rose leaves and catching only two. "I am going to be married. Do you deem that important."

Her father sat down and took his glasses entirely off. "You might fare far and come back to me with something more trivial," he said. "When is the incident to happen?"

"Well, I am only engaged at present," she amended. "Do you remember all that I read you about the wonderful young composer, Herr Comanche?"

"Not quite all, but some of it, yes. You have not told him that I possess a Strad? He is not asking your hand to obtain your daddy's violin?"

"Indeed, he thinks I am far more valuable," said Genevra. "He knows me better than you do, dadkins, already."

"Yes, I suppose he does. That's the way of the world. And yet I know so much of you, after all, that I have thought of this moment most earnestly and with many of a foolish old man's regrets. Who is this Herr Comanche?"

"Dear dadkins, we have got on together famously, and I love you so much," she said, as a preliminary. "And now I want you to read this paper, for he said I must have you read it first, and then I want you to bless us directly—and then something else. Read it fast, dadkins,—it's only one of his whims."

She gave him a sheet of paper on which Roger had copied everything explanatory of his lineage which his father had written for his final perusal. Gordon had insisted that Genevra's father should know who and what he was without delay. To this Genevra had consented the more readily as she knew her own powers of argument with her parent.

"Gallop through it, dadkins, I've something else I want to say," she said, impatiently. "It is only to satisfy poor, morbid Roger."

"He asked you to show me this?" said the man, when he had read to the vital point of what was written.

"Yes. Have you read it through?"

"You don't mind this," said he, with his finger on the paper,—"this strain of—darker blood?"

"No; of course not. Why should I? He is mostly Scotch, like us, and German, French, and English," she answered. "It's only an eighth. It doesn't amount to anything at all."

"You should be very sure that what you feel is not infatuation, merely," he told her. "Genuine love is bad enough. I thought you liked young Lennox—perhaps that way."

"I do like Algy, of course, but not that way. But Roger—I have loved for years," she said, with all that sincerity and out-spoken honesty he knew so well. "When you took me abroad to the States I was only a child, but I saw him then, just once. Don't you remember?—he was the boy who saved me from the snake. And I have liked him ever since,—and now more than ever. Is that an infatuation, dadkins, do you think?"

"You never told me that you felt like that towards any boy."

"No, dadkins. What would have been the use, if we had never met again? Or even if he had not cared for me when we did meet, there would have been no reason for telling. But now, you see, I want your consent—and your blessing for us both."

"It is a serious matter. I always liked Lennox. I wish you to marry well—wisely," he said.

"And happily—oh, happily first!" she replied. "You did that yourself."

"He is a gentleman?" said the man, evasively.

"He is, oh, he is—and he's a man as well," she answered, proudly. "He is so refined, so modest, so gifted! All London is at his feet, and he doesn't seem to know it. They have called him a genius; they have made him a social lion, but none of them knows how truly great he is, nor what he can do. He has won his fame already. The critics call him a genius of the greatest magnitude, but how unspoiled he is! How gentle and cultured he always is! He's the real, noble-hearted gentleman that my own dadkins has always been—or how could I love him as I do?"

"And how much a year will his music earn?" he inquired.

"Oh, nearly anything he wishes," said Genevra, with ingenuous assurance. "But his father left him —what he calls a little fortune, so that will be quite all right."

"Do you love him enough to run away with him, lass, if I refused my consent?" her father asked her, gravely.

"Yes, dadkins," she told him, frankly, "I do. You

ran away with my mother, you know. But you will not refuse your consent. You mustn't—you can't."

"He appears to be honest, to send me this," he said, as he gave her the paper. "I should like to meet him, before we say anything further on the subject."

"I want you to see him. I want you to ask him to come to Datchet and stop with us for the summer," she answered, slipping her arm about his neck. "Then you will be the first one to tell me I am not a foolish child."

"I—hope so," he told her. "I am sorry it isn't Lennox, but—we shall see."

"I am not afraid to trust—some—to your judgment," she said, eagerly. "I know you will like him. You are always such a dear, kind dadkins—and wise. I'll telegraph him directly to come." She kissed him fondly and ran away to summon Gordon forthwith to the scene.

She and her father met him at the train, for which little courtesy they found themselves obliged to go to the station three several times before he arrived.

Genevra ran to him gayly and dragged him by both his hands to her "stern, forbidding parent," as she dubbed her father when she introduced the dignified Gordon.

Harberton looked at him critically. He had not been prepared to find him so dark, but he had expected

features far less classical and a manner a little specious. He mentally agreed that Gordon was a gentleman, handsome enough, and evidently cultured. He even found himself forgetting soon that the man's face was of so deep a bronze.

Whatsoever the affinity was that Roger possessed for Genevra, it was somewhat communicated to her father. Harberton's prejudice slipped from him swiftly.

"If you are certain you prefer him to all the world," he said to Genevra in the evening, "I suppose I shall have to consent."

XXIV

THEIR DAY OF SUMMER

FROM Hampton Court to the long calm reaches of the river beyond Windsor there was not a nook of beauty and seclusion that Roger and Genevra failed to find. Morning, mid-day, and evening the Thames is a thing of beauty and charm. With pollarded willows, meadows that slope away from its brink, trees that hang Narcissus-like on the bank, to catch their own reflected loveliness, windings that lay the sky at the feet of swans or wading boys, and with swallows dipping throughout the lazy day, it entices first to its bosom, and next to its bank, and then again to its placid breast till its magic excites the senses to a species of ecstatic desperation.

"I could float here forever, with only you," said Genevra one day, from her seat on the cushions in the bottom of the punt, "and yet we love the woods so much, we should spend a day, at least once a week, in some of the forests. Let's begin to-morrow with Burnham Beeches. Dadkins is getting to be a regular boy since you came to help me take him out of the house. I am sure he will go to-morrow."

The secret of always obtaining one's wish is to wish for something that is easily obtained. Roger

and Genevra, having found each other, had nothing but simple wishes left to express. They wished to go to the beeches; they went. They wished her father would pother about with his field microscope, or fall asleep beneath a tree; he did both.

"If only we could find a little stream where I could stand out on the rocks in the middle," she said, "then you could come by, on your way to string your 'cello again, and I could scream at a twig for a snake, and you could run to save me, and then I'd take your hand, and we'd go to your 'cello together. I'd like that, dear. And then I would greet you, just as if it were the very first time. Oh, wasn't that first greeting sweet! And the first one when we found each other in the garden at Lady Denby's—and this one!"

He kissed her and she turned rosy red. He took her hand and, pressing it first to his lips, held it against his cheek till she put up the other and drew down his face to her upturned lips, so sweet and soft.

"It doesn't seem so long ago—that day when I saw you first," he said. "I remember it all so vividly."

"And how did I seem to you then?" she asked. "Tell me how I looked."

"You looked like one of the little Rhine maidens, come up from your tiny river, where you had the care of the gold. And your hair had the gold all in it, safe—where no one could take it."

"No one but you," she interrupted. "I'll take it down and put it all in your hands."

Swiftly she shook out the plaits and coils till a shimmering cascade of the nugget-gold strands hung all about her beautiful face. Her gray eyes danced in their own warm light as she drew the masses over her shoulder and hung the long glossy ringlets across his fingers.

"Did I look like that?" she whispered to him, happily.

"Ah, yes, sweetheart, yes, you did, only now you are even more beautiful than then. But I thought there could never be another sight so sweet as you were that day,—and there never was, till now."

"And you looked so sturdy and handsome, dear," she said, as she put her hands on his shoulders and looked in his eyes. "I had never seen a boy like you before. I wanted to tell you to stay. I wanted to say, 'I like you—don't go away.' But I didn't. I was very proper."

"And I couldn't take my eyes away from your dear face, and I fell like the clumsy boy that I was," he laughed. "It was the sweetest day in the world."

"And such a terrible day, too," she said, in awe of the memory of what had followed their happy meeting.

"It ended terribly," he echoed. For a second a light of dread came in his eyes and made them grave.

"We mustn't think of that," Genevra told him brightly. "I want you to tell me again what you thought the first night we met, at Lady Denby's—after all those years—and how you didn't know me. You didn't really mean you were falling in love with me, and thought it a treachery to that other time?"

"I did. What a funny little talk we had! I thought I had never seen such a beautiful girl in all my life. I even forgot my little Genevra. I fell in love with you then and there, all over again."

"And I a perfect stranger!" she said. "Roger! what a naughty boy you were. Aren't you ashamed for forgeting—everything I said—and did—that day when first we met? But I am glad. It was sweet to have you love me again. But I thought things. I thought you meant Lady Fitzhenry. Oh, if it had been that, I shouldn't have wanted to live. And you did treat me dreadfully that day when I poured you the tea. And when I saw you driving in the park with—her, oh, that was terrible!"

"Two poor things that we were," he said, laughing at her gayly.

"You were a poor dear thing," she said. "But when you gave your recital that night, I loved you so

I didn't care for anything. The sad parts broke my heart. I don't see how you ever, ever wrote it."

"It wrote itself," he answered her, seriously. "It wasn't half sad enough to tell the way I felt, here in my heart. Precious, it doesn't seem true that I really have the right to love you now so much as I do, for I never seemed meant for such a happiness."

"Yes, you were, and I was meant to make you happy, dearest. Do you think I really can? I want to, so much. If love can do it, I know I shall. And your love makes me so happy that I think it can."

"That's it," said Roger, as he held her hands against his breast, "I am so strung tight with happiness that I am almost afraid something will break. I don't know how my heart can hold it all."

"You aren't afraid to be happy, dear?"

"Almost," he answered, gravely.

"Then you are sorry you love me," she said, reproachfully.

"Sorry? I am reckless in my gladness. All the joy of the world seems surging in my breast. I can't pour it out, it comes so mightily. I love you as if all the love bequeathed by the hordes of lovers gone before had come upon me clamoring for sanctuary. My joy is so deep that I could comprehend no more. You are all! All! I can't speak it out. No words, no music, could suffice to reveal the God-sent gladness of my

heart. Though jealous destiny should slay me now for daring so to love you, dear, I'd cry out still how glad—how supernally glad you have made me with your precious love!"

He knelt as he spoke and looked up in her sweet, earnest face with a light ineffable in his eyes.

A tidal wave of passion's ecstasy swept coursing through her being. And then for a second she knew the fear of those who love, indeed.

"Oh, Roger, be careful how you talk like that of destiny," she cautioned. "I love you so! I love you so!" She placed her arms about his neck as if to protect him from the unseen Fates. She was silent then, but she gave him a smile that was more than caresses.

"Let's sit on this tree and talk about things," she said at last. "I want you to tell me all about writing 'Paradise Regained.'"

"What shall I tell you of it, dearest?"

"Oh, tell me how you shall do it, and what the story will be. I want to know about glad things. And love must be in it, or how could it be a paradise regained? How could a paradise be, without a lot of love? It couldn't. But I don't see how you can do it all—write such music, I mean—music that will tell it all. I could write it, dearest, but not in music."

"Could you, precious? And what would you write it in?"

"I'll whisper it to you," she answered, blushing radiantly, and, drawing down his head, with her arms about his neck, she said, "Oh, I can't. I would write it like that," and she gave him a little kiss on the cheek. "I could write it in—those—dearest. They would be little sad ones at first, but when we had regained our paradise they would be so rapturous. There would be so much to tell—as there is, between us. And I was so sad when our paradise was lost, and so hungering for your love—and those—all that long, long time we were waiting."

"Little heart!" he said to her, fervently, and, taking her warmly in his arms, he kissed her till her lips were hot and her cheeks aflame.

"It's—too much," she finally gasped, as her eyes looked their love into his. "I can hardly bear it—to be so hungry for—our paradise. I would rather live here forever, in this wood, with you than to go to any other heaven—with lots of other people. Oh, dearest, you mustn't write it quite like this. Not with our sweet joy revealed. This is our own paradise. I don't want you ever to tell of our own sacred paradise, not even in music—not of—all this—and—kisses, I mean."

"I couldn't," he said. "No music could tell of the

love that burns in my heart. Music, if it rose to such a height, could never stop. I mean it would burst past control. It could never be so passionate and yet so chaste as love. Even music would be too gross to tell of such a love as I have for you, my little soul's desire. No, this is ours, and ours alone. This is paradise real; in my music, I know at last, it will only be a fiction."

"I knew you understood," she answered, ardently. "A paradise really once grasped—any paradise but this—will leave nothing more. But the yearning for love is so sweet. I like so to starve for you and your words of love—and never have enough, and starve again and again. I never want to have enough—and yet I mustn't be starved too much—and that will be paradise for us. And you'll not write that. So there," and she gave him one more kiss. "Now tell me what the story will really be."

"All the world is full of poor Adams and Eves," he said. "The story for one pair is the story for all. We all do a little wrong and a little right. We are all oppressed by the sadness of life, with its births and deaths, and we all therefore need to hope. We must have hope. If that is lost, where is paradise? And if hope is restored, no matter what our hope may be, that is paradise regained. There must have been a million forms of hope, a million forms of paradise,

since the world began. I shall therefore go back to Adam and Eve, and give them a hope that comes with a sunset—light so glorious that nothing can shake it, nothing dim its shimmer."

She crept close to his side and nestled against his breast, like a child. "Yes, dear," she said. "The sadness of 'Paradise Lost' was so heart-breaking, the little ray of hope at the end was so faint. And what will the great hope be—Christ's, dear, please,—I should never want to give you up."

"It was such a universal, human hope that Christ made plain," he told her. "Throughout the centuries the Adams and the Eves have hoped that the ties of love that form in life will not be severed. They want each other again, forever. So, very often, that would be paradise enough."

"It would for me,—to have you, dear, forever and ever," she said. "But where would we be? What would paradise be like? When your music restores it, what shall I see?"

"What most you wish to see,—like every one else, dearest heart."

"Then this will be it: Burnham Beeches and you, or that other wood, away out there in Missouri, where you played on the tree, for a 'cello. Make it a forest for us, dear, please."

"Yes, like this," he agreed, "with patient old trees,

with a beauty that goes all through, and a warm breeze making the leaves softly sigh of content; and bird-notes for music, coming from we know not where. I like the sunlight, streaming down on grass and leaves. I like to know the open fields are out beyond, and the river winding so, to prolong its caress to the meadows. It is all such peace here and drowsy warmth. And trees are such brothers. There are so many thousands of Gardens of Eden all over the world, that why should man contend as to which was the one? I could never describe one-half of the beauties in any one, with all the music awakened in my heart."

"But you will think of Burnham Beeches, dearest?" she coaxed. "I want you to say, yes, you will, because I am here at your side. You haven't said anything about me for the longest time."

"It was all about you, rogue. You are my paradise regained. You are forests of sweet warm breaths, and sunlight, and song, and beauty."

He knelt at her feet again and kissed her hands and laughed at her boyishly.

She patted his face and, holding her hands on his firm bronze cheeks, kissed him on his forehead and his lips. It was always in her natural, impulsive way that she kissed him.

"Oh, Roger," she murmured in her joy, "it is so sweet to know that you love me, and let me love you,

dear. I don't want you to write your music yet. I want you to say it all to me. I want all those beautiful, wonderful thoughts in your head and heart just made into love. I couldn't share you with any one, just yet."

"I'm glad," he said. "I would rather you would write it all—in kisses. Only I fear that if ever you find out how much I really love you, precious, you will be alarmed."

"Never. I love you twice as much as you do me," she told him, again flushing red as a rose.

"Let's have no tests," he suggested, "except in protestations."

"And——" She looked at him roguishly.

"Of course." And he kissed her thrice.



III

SUNSHINE



I

AN AFTERMATH

A MONTH before Comanche's recital at the Royal Albert Hall, New York City underwent one of its freaks of weather. A heat wave of summer intensity swept from Washington to Boston through suddenly opened windows.

It was sultry in the evening of one of those April days, even at the top of the lofty building that faced Central Park, where the "mountain air" wafted heavily through the stuffily furnished apartments.

Sitting in front of the window, where the curtain lazily swelled and flattened, were two women, both pretty. They were holding hands, as they faced a man who sat near by in a chair, with his finger-ends held precisely together.

Another man, much the elder of the first, came walking into the room with his slippers slovenly dragging along the floor and his head tilted backward peculiarly.

For the moment no one was speaking. An odor of stale cigar smoke, wine, and flowers hung on the drapery of the place, suggesting the recent departure of the guests who had come to the evening reception.

The two women seated together were obviously

mother and daughter, and yet their features differed widely. The mother was *petite*, dainty, beautiful after the manner of Dresden china. Her hair had become white at the age of thirty, entirely without the influence of cares or griefs, so that it gave no impression or suggestion of age. Her color was soft and radiant. Her cheeks were round and smooth. She was dressed in gray satin, with a violet vest. About her neck, where the gown was cut somewhat low, a double string of pearls seemed to indent their own dimples in which to rest. On her feet she wore the daintiest of violet satin slippers, which swung prettily in view, with violet silk stockings revealed in pleasant curves.

For a moment it might have seemed that the eyes of the two women were equally dark, but those of the daughter were brown, while the mother's were purple. The hair of the younger woman was wavy golden-brown. There was a wide-open, innocent look in her eyes, above which her brows were heavily pencilled in jet black. A serious little pucker came frequently between her eyes, but she always laughed it away, in a girlish manner. Her upper lip was particularly short. Altogether her face was striking; it was arch and yet it conveyed a sense of childishness and simplicity.

The man who had come into the room, slurring his feet along the floor, was a small, gray being with a

naked head, hammocks of flesh on his face, and eyes with lids so heavily drooping that he tilted his head backward to look at any one he chanced to be addressing.

"Well," he said, growlingly, as he drew up a chair and sat down, "I'm glad it's over. That's what the fellow said when the wagon ran over his legs. 'I'm glad it's over,' the fellow said, when it was over. And that's what I am; I'm glad it's over."

His hearers laughed, the mother with particular mellowness and gayety. "Oh, Jimsie, you are so comical," she said, playfully striking towards him with a fan. "Robert, you know Mr. Chichester always has to have his joke."

The man addressed as Robert smiled and nodded. He was as faultless as a billiard ball, with his smoothed hair, his oval cheeks, and his polish, which was shown even in the manner of his smile.

"Yes," Mr. Chichester readily agreed; "you see the man was thrown down and run over by a wagon. So when it was over he said, 'I'm glad it's over.' And that's what I said,—I'm glad——"

Everybody laughed and interrupted the finish.

"I guess we're all glad it's over," said the daughter, looking inquiringly at Robert. "I'm sure I am, for one."

"Exactly," put in Mr. Chichester, cheerfully, "that's

just the point,—glad it's over. The man had just been thrown down, and the wheels passed over his legs. Then he said, 'I'm glad it's over.' Good, isn't it? So that's why I said I'm glad it's over, meaning this beastly reception. That's the point. I'm glad it's over."

Yet again every one appreciated the humor. Mr. Chichester had long retained possession of considerable money.

"Yes," sighed the older woman; "but I do love receptions. How did I look?"

"Your appearance always commands admiration, Mrs. Chichester," observed Robert, who was otherwise Mr. Dunn.

"Yes, mamma, dear, you are always lovely," said the daughter, wistfully. "You always outshine the callers, the bride, and everybody else."

"Dear me, hear the honest child!" said Mrs. Chichested, laughing as a kitten might be expected to laugh. "But I do suppose it is really my duty to look my best."

"My dear, you are a beautiful woman," her husband informed her. "You're a charming woman, but I'm glad it's——"

"Thank you, my dear," Mrs. Chichester smilingly interrupted. "The evening was certainly a great success. Mr. Rudder and Harry Fenn both paid me such

delightful compliments. Mr. Rudder has such a soul for the beautiful, and Mr. Fenn is always such a dear, reliable creature, with such splendid taste."

"Eh, Sunshine," said Mr. Chichester, looking at the daughter with his head tilted backward, "do you really feel—eh—married? Do you feel like Mrs. Dunn, my dear? You've gone and Dunn it, you know."

Everybody enjoyed this immensely.

"Oh, yes," answered the bride; "I have been called Mrs. Dunn so much since Christmas, wherever we've been, that I begin to wonder if I ever was just plain Sunshine Chichester."

"But you've gone and Dunn it. Your name is Dunn. You've gone and Dunn it," Chichester explained.

His auditors were loyal.

"Oh, Jimsie," ripplingly protested his wife, "really you will be the death of me, you comical thing. If laughing weren't becoming I should never have dared to marry him, never." And she arched her brows in playful good humor.

"You see, she married Mr. Dunn," continued the man of jokes. "She went to do it. She took his name. She's gone and Dunn it."

Mr. Dunn felt obliged to stroke his jaws, so stiff were they growing with merriment. After this he smoothed his Vandyke beard to its customary point.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Chichester to her daughter, "I hope you will always be as happy as your mamma. Everybody has always made me happy."

Had the lady confessed she had always been flattered and spoiled, and that doubtless she should perish without adulation from every possible source, the statement would have been no more than merely adequate.

"You are very thoughtful, dear little mother," Sunshine answered. "How many people do you think were here?"

"We sent out cards to one hundred and fifty, but of course only half the invited people ever come," replied the mother. "I think it was selfish of Holbrook Mann not to come. He always says such original things about the way I look—and so sincere and honest."

"I liked that Mrs. Gudrun, who came with Mrs. Trapp," said Sunshine. "Mrs. Gudrun's name reminded me of a man we saw at New Orleans last week. You remember, Robert?"

Mr. Dunn replied that he did.

Chichester shuffled out of the room. He was bored; and he also remembered a certain unconsumed bottle of champagne, still on ice.

"A very tall man he must have been, but his back was bent; and his hair was gray and curly," the bride continued. "It was really quite odd,—what hap-

pened. Our wheel came off,—I mean the wheel of our carriage,—and I got quite a fright. But this man ran right up. He must have been wonderfully strong, for he lifted the axle—do they call it the axle, Robert?"

Robert nodded.

"He lifted it right up and put on the wheel—all alone, before we could even get out; didn't he, Robert? And then he found the screw thing——"

"The nut," Mr. Dunn corrected.

"The nut, and mended the carriage instantly."

"Rather remarkable performance," said Sunshine's husband. "Quite remarkable, for a negro."

"I hate negroes," Mrs. Chichester remarked, with emphasis. "My dear child, why do you speak of anything so indelicate?"

"But he wasn't a negro," Sunshine protested. "He was nearly white, and his hair just a little curly. And Robert gave him a quarter. The man said his name was Gordon,—George Gordon,—and really I liked him right away. Wasn't it funny?"

"I don't see anything funny at all," Mrs. Chichester answered, fanning herself with vigor. "Negroes are low. I never like to think of negroes. I don't wish to know there are any negroes. I wish they would all die, or go away. I don't see why they shouldn't." She arose somewhat abruptly. "The sudden heat

has made me sleepy," she added. "My dear Sunshine and Robert, I must say good-night."

Thus abruptly to have learned from her daughter that George Gordon still survived might in all reason have agitated Mrs. Chichester far more deeply than it did. She had once been Gordon's wife, and she was the mother of Roger, his son. She had hoped, moreover, that both were dead.

But angered as she was by Sunshine's story, and vexed to know that Gordon should have survived, she soon beheld her own reflection in the mirrors on her walls and was presently practising agreeable expressions, with all the art with which she had been so generously endowed.

II

A FRIEND IN NEED

ABOMINABLE and, indeed, disgusting as she conceived it to be for Roger Gordon's father not only to be in existence, but actually once more in America, Mrs. Chichester's mind would soon have been occupied with other concerns had her daughter's tale been all that circumstance intended to furnish on the subject thus dragged from the past. But ordinarily circumstance arranges her fateful affairs in clusters, and thus her many little incidents happen one behind another.

Several days had elapsed, and Sunshine's story of her drive in New Orleans was duly blurred in her mother's mind, when an item appeared in a local New York paper that mustered a score of new and startling thoughts for that pretty little lady's diversion.

Bertha Chichester's habits of reading were peculiar to herself. She read the "personal" advertisements and the "Doings of Society" almost exclusively, and she read in bed, after routing out her husband to exercise a brindle dog as gruesome of countenance as a Chinese idol. The "personals" she kept as plums of reading, just as when a child she had plucked the raisins from her pudding, to eat with avidity, the

while she bestowed the dough upon her mother. Thus it came that she fingered out and devoured the following:

"GORDON. If George Gordon, the son of Donald Gordon, deceased, who is a nephew of David Gordon, also recently deceased, or the heirs at law of said George Gordon, will communicate with the undersigned, he or they will learn of something of great advantage.

"BILLINGS & STRONG,
"*Attorneys.*
"NUCLEUS BUILDING, BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY."

Mrs. Chichester stared at this item with an interest which soon became intense. She read it three or four times over. It amazed her, baffled her, awoke strange wonderings and deep-laid cupidities in her nature.

George Gordon! That man again!—and in such a connection as this! How well she remembered him, speaking the names of his father and uncle!

What could it mean? Was it property, left by his uncle, thus advertised as recently deceased? And if so, was it nothing, now, to her? She had once had all that George Gordon could give. It seemed as if she must still have claims to anything he owned.

But she puzzled her brain over "heirs at law." The

phrase was somewhat, but not entirely, beyond her ken. Dimly she wondered if Sunshine Dunn could not be construed as an heir at law. She was presently demanding that this should be so. What right had a man who was working with the negroes at New Orleans to inherit a property—if property were meant by this notice staring upward from the type—if he stood in the light of her child and herself?

Something half sophistry, half cunning, was making its argument swiftly in her thoughts. It might mean so very much,—this word to the Gordons. A score of possibilities arose before her vision. But all went toppling at the onslaught of her partial ignorance. To her that "heirs at law" was a sinister thing in which importance indubitably lurked.

Inflamed, as she swiftly became, through the agencies of pique and curiosity, Mrs. Chichester lost little time in determining that she must immediately pay a visit at the offices of Billings & Strong. Then she thought of her husband, and burned with impatience to have him return. She knew he could readily inform her as to the meaning of "heirs at law," howsoever much or little the words might imply.

She arose in haste, and cutting the notice from the column of print, concealed it at once in her purse. Her toilet she then concluded with such alacrity that when Chichester presently appeared, with the gruesome dog,

she was seated already at the table for breakfast. She glanced at the man, to read his mood, as he slurred his way across the floor to his chair.

"Well, Jimsie," she said, with a pretty pout, "well?"

"Well," said he, "what?"

"You haven't noticed how I look, or said a single word."

"You are very pretty—what have we got for breakfast?" said he, looking hungrily about. "Where's my toast?"

"It's here, you cross old thing, but you shan't have a bite till you've said I'm nice."

Like the dog, who went through certain fulsome tricks at the same command, Mr. Chichester ran around the table. "You're nice, you're very beautiful, adorable, and nice," said he. "Gim-me!" and he snatched the plate of toast. "You're damned nice," he said to himself, and trotted back to his chair.

"I don't believe you mean a word you say," said Bertha, who had missed his final observation.

"Well, I do. I mean it all," said he, having in mind the confidence imparted to himself. "I mean even more, my dear. Gim-me something to drink. I'll get no rest from the damned dyspepsia till I eat."

"Oh, has he got a little dyspepsia?" she inquired. "I've always told you, Jimsie, to leave ice-cream for me. It always improves my color, and it always ruins

yours. But there! you're such a darling, with all your faults."

Her husband growled at this, from his toast, down in his plate.

"Jimsie, what is an heir at law?" she inquired. "You are my walking—oh, one of those books that tell you everything,—not a dictionary,—you know what I mean——"

"Encyclopædia," growled Mr. Chichester, less pugnaciously.

"Yes, that's it. And what is an heir at law?"

"Sometimes it's a brat, sometimes a *roué*, sometimes a woman. Anybody that gets a dead man's shoes."

"Oh! But how does a woman ever get to be one?"

"By blarney, ordinarily."

"No; now you tell me all about it. You are always so clever, Jimsie."

"Nothing to tell," said he, indifferent to all his erudition. "If a man dies, his sons or his daughters —if he has 'em—would be his heirs. If he hasn't, his wife might come in. If he hasn't any wife and kids, then his brother or sister, or their brats, or his own mother and father, according to the law. 'Most anybody's willing."

He tilted back his head to look at his wife, and decided not to crack a joke which occurred to his mind. Indeed, Mr. Chichester rarely wasted his jokes on an

audience of one, particularly if the one were his partner for life. He preferred to scatter his wit into flocks of victims.

"Oh, dear," said Bertha, "it's such a lot to remember. And you mean, Jimsie, if a man died and left his property all to his brother's son,—his nephew,—just for instance, and the son was dead, then the son's wife would be the heir at law?"

"Of course. Where's the claret?" He reached the bottle and pouring a glass full swallowed it down at a gulp.

Bertha had sipped hot chocolate and eaten a plate of macaroons. She was one of those enigmas with whose liver, complexion, and conscience nothing ever disagrees.

"I don't know why I ask such a lot of silly questions," she said, with a laugh. "By the way, my dear, I wish you'd go over to Sunshine's a moment and tell them not to call with the carriage till three o'clock. I find I've got to go shopping. How do I look in this green and white. Good-by, dear, you may kiss me now. I hate to be all pawed and disarranged when I've got my hat on. Good-by."

She put on a hat and veil and, taking a parasol, tripped out and along the Park to the Fifth Avenue entrance, where she took a hansom for lower Broadway.

A FRIEND IN NEED

There were three large rooms in the Nucleus Building devoted to the needs and uses of Billings & Strong, all of them breathing of law-calf bindings. It chanced that Messrs. Billings & Strong were both at court when Bertha made her appearance, but a middle-aged, red-haired clerk arose from the chair intended for clients, to give her greeting.

"Good-morning," said Mrs. Chichester, advancing with outstretched hand. "I'm so glad to find you in. Is this Mr. Billings or Mr. Strong?"

"Ahem—er—permit me to offer you a chair. Er—my name is Billings," and he deftly pushed from sight a blotter in which he had been diligently writing "Charles Billings Portbridge," with many flourishes.

He was, in fact, the son of a man who was an admirer of the senior member of the firm. This was not the first occasion on which the clerk had found it expedient to merge his personality in that of his absent employer.

"Oh, how charming!" said Bertha. "I expected to see—shall I really confess?—a cross old man who couldn't see anything in the world but law."

"Madam," said the clerk, "I assure you there never—and this I say without fear of successful contradiction—there never was a legal gentleman who would not fail to lose all sight of law and everything of earth on beholding yourself."

"Oh, you eloquent gentlemen! you are so accustomed to say exactly what you think."

Mr. Portbridge, who looked on her beauty out of two little button-hole eyes, the orbs of which gave the impresion of swimming in the fat of his overhanging lids and upward-rolling cheeks, appeared to have spoken precisely what was in his mind. "We are—ahem—accustomed, of course, to giving sound, judicial opinions," he agreed.

"Of course you are. And that's just exactly what I came to get. I never know a thing about my rights."

"Madam," said the clerk, rising and bowing profoundly, with his hand upon his heart, "I honor myself by declaring to all in the sound of my voice that your rights have found a place in my heart, from which they shall never be removed while I live."

"Oh, what dear, kind men you lawyers are," said Bertha, shaking her finger at him coyly. "And maybe it wasn't worth coming for at all. It's about your advertisement in the paper." She opened her purse to take out the clipping. "There,—Gordon, something of advantage to the Gordons. I was the widow, you know, of Mr. David Gordon's nephew."

"Phew!" said the clerk to himself. "Ah," he added, aloud, "how very fortunate—yes, very fortunate indeed."

"And I'd like to know what the great advantage is. I suppose it could hardly be property."

"Er—Gordon—yes, I remember the name—we have so very many clients, you will understand—er—Mrs. —Mrs.——"

"My name is Chichester now."

"Mrs. Chichester—ah! But I think I may say, without fear of successful contradiction, there is property; in fact, to wit, a large amount. Mr. David Gordon, deceased, left one hundred thousand dollars—to his nephew—er—Joseph——"

"To George Gordon! Oh, how very kind!"

"To George Gordon. I think I understood you to say you were the widow of this nephew, George Gordon? Are you as positive of this as anything you have heretofore sworn to?—excuse me if I seem to proceed according to legal habit."

"Oh, dear, yes. I've brought my wedding certificate along."

He looked at it gloatingly. What he saw was between the paper and his eyes, however,—a plan which was weaving, but not entirely formed, in his mind. The apparent perusal gave him a moment in which to think.

"Very good—exceptional evidence, *prima facie* evidence, my dear madam. Er—Mr. Gordon—pardon the question—did he die without issue?"

"Oh, yes," said Bertha, laughingly, "he died without any—what did you say?"

"Issue—children. Did he die without leaving children?"

"Oh, how stupid of me! issue—of course. No, oh, no; my daughter, my daughter Sunshine—married at Christmas. We had her reception yesterday. Too bad I couldn't have known you, Mr. Billings, in time to send you a card. She is Mr. Gordon's daughter."

"Ah! And you had no other children by Mr. Gordon?"

"No, oh, no. Dear me, and am I really heir at law?"

"You and your daughter, my dear madam, beyond the question of a doubt."

"Well, then, can't we get it all settled right away? I should like to have the advertisement discontinued at once. It's a matter—it's a family matter."

"Huh. But the law prescribes certain regulations, and another salient feature is this, that the contracts to print this notice have been made with various publications, and could not be readily revoked.

"Oh, that is wretched!" pouted Bertha. "Really, Mr. Billings, I think that is too bad. Couldn't you stop them? It doesn't come out except in New York papers, does it—not as far away as—as New Orleans —just for instance?"

"I am not prepared to give you any definite infor-

mation at this particular moment, but I should venture to say it appears in several cities; in fact, I do so allege, without fear of successful contradiction."

"How very provoking! Couldn't we—you know—couldn't we stop them? You lawyers are always so clever. Couldn't you do that—just a little thing like that—for me?"

"Madam," Mr. Portbridge replied, rising again, with his hand on his breast, "there is nothing—and this I proclaim to all in the sound of my voice—there is nothing I would hesitate to attempt for so charming and—excuse me—so beautiful a woman as yourself——"

"Oh, you eloquent, naughty lawyers——"

"But, unfortunately, these things require manipulation, and—er—capital. If,"—and here he lowered his voice—"if, my dear—er—I could be assured of a quiet continuation of our friendship, I would—er—be willing to undertake what you desire for a modest retainer."

"You mean—oh, you men confuse me so—you will do it for friendship—and what else?"

"Just a nominal fee. That is to say, to wit, if you will bring me,—let us put it ridiculously low,—say, five thousand dollars—to my private office—not here, you know, I will undertake this serious bit of work,—provided our friendly relations—er—increase; for, be-

lieve me, your personal charms, my dear—er—are of greater consideration than all the rest."

"Oh, you artful thing," Mrs. Chichester answered, shaking her parasol towards him; "but five thousand dollars—isn't that a great deal of money? Couldn't you do it for less—just for me?"

The clerk came suddenly around the table, kneeled at her feet, and took her hand, to kiss it madly. "For you," he said, ardently, "I will do it for a wretched three thousand dollars and affectionate——"

"Oh," she cried, jumping quickly away and laughing nervously, "you artful, delightful lawyers! Really I must be going, I really must. I had nearly forgotten a pressing engagement. Then you will fix it up all right for the money——"

"And friendship, my charming client." He took her hand in both his own and pressed it kindly. "It isn't quite—er—regular—you understand. I assume a risk for your—er—lovely sake, my dear, but for the paltry three thousand I will do it, if you will bring it to-morrow to my private office,—and here is the address." He wrote on a card and gave it to her, taking her hand once more to present it.

"I'll try—I'll try," said Mrs. Chichester, frightened a trifle; "but now I must go. Good-by." And she opened the door and slipped from the room.

The clerk started to follow, but checked himself

abruptly and contented himself with thumping his thorax and making a series of faces, each fairly representative of the various breeds of pigs. Then he went to the inner office, approached the safe and halted. From a pocket he drew forth a key which proved to be quite the thing wherewith to unlock an inside compartment of the vault. From this he extracted and rapidly perused a bundle of papers, marked "Estate of David Gordon."

"Hum," he said, "just as I thought. Memory not so bad."

He read aloud: "'—and I want you to know, Uncle David, that my wife has had a son, and I am ashamed to say she has deserted him entirely and she has sent him away and will not see him at all any more, and I take the precaution of letting you know he was born in case there should ever be any need for anybody to know.'" All of which was but part of a letter signed in San Francisco, years before, by George Gordon.

"Yes," resumed the clerk in a moment, whisking the papers again in the safe, "yes—she ought to be a lawyer herself. I'll stop that notice in the *Sun*, for I'll bet she never reads anything else; but the whole thing has got to be done in a hurry. Friendship and three thousand dollars! Hey? Charlie,—ha, ha, ho, hoa,!—you're a devil of a fellow and a damned slick piece of goods."

III

MR. CHICHESTER ACQUIESCES

MRS. CHICHESTER shopped to the extent of purchasing a lace handkerchief, a pair of gloves, and some silk hosiery. She drove up Fifth Avenue, arriving at Delmonico's at one. There she partook of refreshments which occupied her attention till 2.30, when she drove home in time to change her hat, touch her face with a trifle of powder, and join her husband and Mr. and Mrs. Dunn in their carriage.

The route they took began at the fashionable entrance to the park. Mother and daughter sat back in the cushions, Mrs. Dunn gazing fondly at her husband, Mrs. Chichester watching alertly for glances of admiration from the passers-by.

"I always love to ride in a brougham," Sunshine confessed, girlishly; "it always seems to sweep along so finely, don't you know?"

"Eh—yes," said Mr. Chichester, tilting back his head to look at them all from beneath his heavy lids, "a new brougham—heh, heh! a new brougham always sweeps clean."

The company laughed gayly.

"Oh, Jimsie! Isn't he comical?" said his wife.

"Very good—very clever," Mr. Dunn agreed.

"You see," the joker answered them, "this is a brougham,—broom, you see,—and Sunshine says it sweeps along finely, so I say a new brougham sweeps clean."

The risibilities of all were again excited.

"Well, Jimsie, that is a delicious *bon mot*," said Bertha, tapping his knee with her parasol, "but I love a brougham because it gives all the people you meet such a nice chance to see how you look."

"You always look very pretty, dear little mother," said the bride.

"Of course," Mr. Chichester here explained, "that's a very old and remarkable proverb,—'a new broom sweeps clean,'—and Sunshine says she likes a brougham because it sweeps along, you see. That's what makes it so good, so I said, 'A new brougham sweeps clean.'"

The trio proved how hard it is to kill a certain species of laughter. Mr. Dunn somewhat abruptly opened a monologue on buying wheat on a margin, a topic which he knew transfixed the joker infallibly. A banker himself, Mr. Dunn presented a plausible exterior always. He never raised his voice, never spoke with rapidity, and never, it would have seemed, permitted his blood to circulate except during banking hours. He subscribed, modestly, to anything and everything in or about the church, rented his tenements at the

highest prices, and dispossessed delinquents with calm impartiality, winter and summer alike.

So thoroughly was Mr. Chichester side-tracked from his joke that he failed to deliver it even so much as one more time. He tilted back his head to regard Mr. Dunn till his neck was stiff. The ladies found it necessary to amuse each other; or, more accurately, Sunshine found it essential to admire her mother. Bertha pouted her way in between sophistries on "margin," and her husband finally managed another repeating joke before the ride was finished.

Mrs. Chichester hastened the end of the drive somewhat by allusions to fatigue and her personal appearance when weary. Thus at six o'clock she found herself alone with her husband at the table, eating pink shrimp salad and green ice-cream, and resting preparatory to spending the evening at the opera.

"Jimsie," she said, "you darling, delightful old thing, I've been waiting to tell you some news. You know I did look worried to-day, simply because I had this secret on my mind."

Mr. Chichester munched at hot bacon and cold mutton with mushroom sauce, drinking claret every moment. "The beauty of bacon is, it makes you thirsty," he said to his wife.

"Oh, you selfish thing," she pouted. "You don't deserve to know what the secret is."



"Oh, it's probably lotion for my hair," he conjectured, and gulped at his wine.

"No, it isn't; and just to make you ashamed I'll tell you it's money,—one hundred thousand dollars. And I'll just give it all right straight up, and I won't move a step to get it—so now!"

"Huh," said her husband, "don't be a fool. How will you go to work to get a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Oh, it isn't worth speaking of at all. I don't care for the money. We will drop the subject. What shall I wear this evening? Do you like me in the pale yellow and white crepe?"

"I like you best in green—backs; they're getting rare. Now, my love, I'm listening—if you've really got anything to say."

"No, I haven't, Jimsie. A hundred thousand dollars is nothing to me. I only thought you might like to have it. But hair-lotion—I'll talk about that, if you like."

"My dear, beautiful wife," said Chichester, looking at her keenly with his head far back, "I like to listen to anything you have to say. Go ahead, now, huh?"

"No, Jimsie, it's a thing that needs money, and I've got to do it secretly or not at all, and I won't try to put your love for me to any test."

"But, sweetheart, I want to be tested. I have a right to want to be tested. I love you. I trust you —hem—and I recognize your wisdom—I do! And a hundred thousand,—come now, I was cross and wrong, and I promise to listen, huh?"

"Well, you would have to trust me to do the whole thing alone, and help me all you can, or I couldn't think of telling or trying."

"All right, I'll promise to let you do the thing alone. Dem it! Haven't I the right to prove I trust my adorable little wife? Dem it! I have!"

"Then—it's stocks—Wall Street—but the very best kind. And I want three thousand dollars, and I'll get one hundred thousand back—and it's ever so much surer than your old margins; and it can't fail—you'd know it couldn't if I told you; and there isn't any risk; and that's all I can tell you, except a man told me who is very high up, and the hundred thousand dollars is almost right in my hands—so there!"

"What kind of stock?"

"Now, there you go! I knew you'd just begin with questions. I told you I couldn't tell any more till we get the money, and I wish I hadn't said a word. I'll drop it right this minute!"

"Dem it! wait my pet. I don't want to ask any questions. I trust you completely, but——"

"But! Yes, but! Just what I knew was coming.

Will you give me the three thousand dollars, or shall I drop it all and never, never try again to get it?"

"I'd give you the money, my dear, if I had it, but I haven't. All but five hundred dollars is up on a margin now, and—hem—gone, in fact. And Dunn says he hasn't a cent that isn't tied, or he'd help me out; and there you are, huh?"

"And you mean to sit there and tell me, James Higgins Chichester, that you've gone and gambled away every cent we had but five hundred dollars?"

"My dear, we only had four thousand dollars to gamble. I had to try to retrieve our lost fortunes. We've spent it, sweetheart. But I'll give you all that's left. You can take the five hundred to-morrow."

"Oh, you selfish thing! Then you'll have to give me your diamond rings and studs. And all my diamonds and pearls will have to go. We've got to have that hundred thousand dollars, then we'll get the things all back, and a lot of new ones besides. I'll take that five hundred dollars right away, and the ring and studs the minute you get back from the opera to-night. Or else—shall I drop it right this minute, hundred thousand and all?"

"No, no, no, my dear," said Chichester, trotting around the table; "no, my darling beautiful. But I hope you won't be long in getting the money."

IV

MRS. CHICHESTER ENLIGHTENED

CHARLES BILLINGS PORTBRIDGE waited long on the following day in his "private office," but not in vain. It was late in the afternoon when Mrs. Chichester finally appeared, and the clerk was impatient to return to his post. She had "raised" only twenty-five hundred dollars, inclusive of Mr. Chichester's last half a thousand, and this, after much persuasion on the part of herself and a deal of gallantry from the clerk, he accepted.

Mr. Portbridge impressed upon her mind the necessity of keeping their counsel to themselves, and, replying to Bertha's desire to have the fortune placed in her hands by "Monday morning," assured her of the gravity of everything legal, the slow and careful movements of the great judicial machine, and the risk he now undertook on her behalf, concluding by promising anything and everything by the end of five or six weeks.

Having reached the limit of her cunning in forming and executing the plan to this point, Mrs. Chichester had not sufficient reserve of tact even to secure a receipt for the money delivered. She left the office a trifle disappointed at the necessary wait, but

gratified with her stratagem and powers of "getting her way" in the end. On her way home she found herself too fatigued to order the three new dresses which she felt her husband had forfeited by his spendthrift conduct. However, on the morrow of the day of triumph she ordered not only the dresses, but stockings and slippers to go with each, in addition to many less important requisites of her toilet.

All these goods she procured on credit. Indeed, although credit was not a novel thing in Chichester's life, a larger creature grew from this embryonic bill-germ than ever had flourished before in their career.

Credit is often an inside decay, that creeps in unobtrusively, like the rot which enters the back door of an apple, leaving the polished exterior whole, while devouring in darkness till all the substance to the very skin is gone.

The Chichesters inaugurated a comprehensive system of rapid internal decay. The weeks went by, and at length the mail brought a letter, a fatty expression of regret from "Mr. Billings" that the courts had not entirely concluded the matter "*in re* Gordon." They must still maintain their judicious silence, but at the utmost another month would see the matter settled to their mutual satisfaction. With many assurances of affectionate esteem and admiration, the letter concluded by begging his client to remain away

from the office for the present, and to "burn this communication without delay."

Credit stuffed its maw even more greedily than before. There came a day, however, when Bertha determined to call upon her legal adviser, loathsome butchers and grocers having sent their respects and ultimatums at the end of odious bills.

The private head-quarters of Mr. Portbridge proving to be tenanted by a protoplasmic newspaper syndicate and literary bureau, Mrs. Chichester wended her way again to the Nucleus Building and entered the offices of Billings & Strong.

A man in a frock coat and light-gray trousers, hands in pockets and eyes on the floor, was walking up and down in the place, alone. He turned about, revealing a face with jaw muscles more than usually developed, keen gray eyes, moustache tobacco-stained, and nose a trifle hooked.

"Morning," said he, as he halted in his parade and kept on thinking of his business. "I beg your pardon, good-morning, madam. I—er—I seem to forget. Hicks *versus* Coe, or Green *versus* Green?"

"Why," said Mrs. Chichester, smiling witchingly, "I don't quite understand. I came to see Mr. Billings. Isn't the gentleman in? That's his desk, is it not?"

"Clerk's desk, madam. Billings is out of town, so

is the clerk. Too hot weather for even lawyers to fight. Permit me to introduce myself—Strong, A. C. Strong, at your service."

"Oh, thank you so much. I'm delighted to meet you, Mr. Strong. Your face almost seems familiar, but faces so often do, Mr. Strong—and it makes me feel,—of course, it's absurd,—but it makes me feel as if I had known a person a very long time."

"Uh—well, sit down, madam, sit down."

"Why, I only came for a moment, but all you legal gentlemen are so persuasive," and she took the chair. "Did you tell me," she resumed, "that the gentleman who sits at this desk is the—clerk?"

"Clerk, madam, yes—clerk, Portbridge—fat man—mouth like a hole in a ham, head as red as that ink."

"And his name—of course, he is Mr. Billings?"

"Billings? Billings looks like a whittled bit of last year's potato-skin, with a better head than Napoleon Bonaparte ever dared to own. Sorry he's out."

"Oh, said Bertha, attempting still to smile. "It is too bad, but after all—it may be a foolish fancy—but I always prefer to talk to a pleasant-looking man—if you'll excuse the forwardness, it does so seem as if I have known you all my life."

"Uh. Thank you, madam. You called in about—it isn't Snow *versus* Black?"

"Dear me, no. How intensely interesting all you say is, Mr. Strong. I just came in to inquire—just as I was passing, you know,—about the Gordon heir at law,—David Gordon."

"Exactly," said he, regarding her sharply. "Did you say your name is Gordon?"

"Oh, dear, bless you, no." And Bertha burst into mellow laughter. "My name is Chichester—Mrs. James Chichester—there, I have a visiting card,—and we'd be charmed to have you call, Mr. Strong. My name used to be Mrs. George Gordon, and my daughter's name was Gordon, of course, but even as a child, when her father died and Mr. Chichester fairly made me marry again, she preferred Chichester. It's so aristocratic—you really couldn't blame the child. Isn't it comical, really?"

"Very comical, indeed," said the lawyer, "especially as Mr. George Gordon is alive and kicking—hang him! He kicks around so fast we can't even run him down to make him rich."

"Oh!" cried Bertha, "they haven't really found him?—I mean—it isn't—it can't be possible. Why, if all the property—the hundred thousand dollars—is left to him, the heirs—Mr. Billings didn't tell me—— There, I don't know what I'm saying. You legal gentlemen fluster me so."

"You started a very fair legal deduction," Mr.

Strong assured her, coldly. "George Gordon being alive, as we have ascertained, there are no other heirs at law, as there would be, certainly, if the fellow were dead, but——"

"But he fell off the steamer—Australian steamer—and was drowned," volunteered the lady, recovering ground.

"But his son——"

"Oh, who told you he had a son?—he hasn't—how did you know?"

"——his son and daughter would take precedence in the matter of inheritance," he concluded. "Uh, yes. Permit me to thank you for adding your link to the chain that hangs Portbridge. Sugar-coated scoundrel — I knew it! How much did you pay him?"

"I paid him——" She started to cry, but checked herself and laughed instead. "Really, you clever, clever lawyers. I'm such a little woman, I really can't try. I'm really confused. I must hurry home at once. So pleased to have met you, Mr. Strong."

"Uh," said he, eyeing her as if he were scrutinizing the back of her skull through her transparent arts. "I think Portbridge would have done whatever he did for half the money, or less. If you paid him more than fifty cents you lack discrimination. I suppose he promised you all the legacy at once? Procuring money un-



der false pretences. Don't suppose you care to prosecute the case?"

"Prosecute him—the wretched robber? Yes, I will!" she responded, in a passion. "How can I do it? He took every cent I had——"

"What for?" said the man, in a cold-steel voice. "What did he promise to do?"

"What for? Why, he said he'd get me—he'd stop—I don't remember—I——"

"Then you don't care to prosecute, and tell about it in court?"

"What do you mean? How dare you stand there and insinuate all sorts of things about an innocent woman? I have never been treated so—no gentleman ever speaks to me like that!"

"No plug hat and dress suit ever told you the truth, you mean. You are unfortunate never to have had a friend to tell you the truth. I have not the honor of being your friend, but I will make no charge for letting you know that whatever you paid the clerk is lost. At present you have no rights whatsoever in the Gordon estate. Madam, I wish you a very good-day."

Mrs. Chichester burst into a passionate speech, but the man merely walked to an inner apartment. She was forced to retreat, and she hastened home to vent her anger on the slinking dog and her husband.

Lawyer Strong penned a notice to the clerk, re-

lieving that functionary of further duties at the office, and another to his partner, to acquaint him with the fact. Then he placed his hands in his pockets and resumed his march, working knots either out of or into the case of Somebody *versus* Somebody Else.

V

ROGER'S NEWS

ASTUTE as Strong & Billings were, they were a long time discovering the whereabouts of Roger Gordon through the medium of their advertisement, which eventually came to the notice of Doctor Pingle. They were even slower in ascertaining anything concerning Roger's father, George Gordon. At the time of Mrs. Chichester's final visit to their offices they were in possession of the fact that the nephew of David Gordon had left Australia, bound presumably for America, and this was all. Any assertion to Mrs. Chichester to the contrary, notwithstanding, A. C. Strong could only conjecture, at the best, that George Gordon was still alive. Naturally Mrs. Chichester did not communicate the fact that her daughter had seen the much-sought-for man in New Orleans.

The summer had therefore come to an end in England before any intelligence of what was going on in America was sent to Roger. The warm, bright months had been an intermezzo to Gordon in the somewhat tragic opera of his life. He had written a little music, all of it rose-tinted by the influence of the tender passion; he had rambled woods and fields with Genevra, never finding even nature so beautiful as she, and

he had quaffed day by day from the deep cup of content.

Genevra was even more childishly happy than he. She was not so afraid to be joyous, not so inherently suspicious of the smile of the jade, Fate.

The date for the wedding was set for December. The autumn being exceptionally fine and warm, the Harberton's and Roger remained still at Datchet. However, the day of returning to town was approaching. The garden-parties the two had attended together were becoming to Roger and Genevra mere memories of charming moments, that jumbled themselves with dreams of house-boats, the Henley regatta, and days all their own in the forests.

The plans for what they would do in London were formulating delightfully, when Gordon received a letter from Strong & Billings.

"DEAR SIR,"—it read, "After several months of diligent search, we have received satisfactory evidence not only of your present residence abroad, but also that you are without doubt the son of George Gordon, and as such possibly the heir, or one of the heirs, of said George Gordon's uncle, David Gordon, recently deceased. We beg to inform you that we are at present engaged in further search for the said George Gordon, whom we believe to be somewhere in this country,

but who may, nevertheless, be dead. We have pleasure in writing you that the said David Gordon, deceased, bequeathed property to the said George Gordon to the value of about one hundred and ten thousand dollars. We shall hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience, our trust being that you may have received intelligence of the said George Gordon, either as to his demise or his present whereabouts, if he is still living. We are, sir, your obedient servants,

"BILLINGS & STRONG."

Roger read this letter a number of times, and then laid it down on his table and stared at it silently for a long time. The old excitement which always arose in his breast at the thought of his father returned to make his heart beat faster. After all these years of mystery, to have such a thing as this come hunting him out gave him the weird sensation as of a shock from a summer sky.

Was there, then, the slightest possibility that his father lived? Where had he been these twenty-four years and over? How would it seem, supposing he should ever meet his father? He shook his head as these and many other questions came to him, one after another. He was not much affected by the news of this great inheritance. He was comfortably provided for already, as the result of this same strange father's

foresight and generosity. He had paid back to Doctor Pingle a considerable sum of money, more than enough to cover what his economical living had cost him during his years of study, but what he had then remaining seemed to him an abundance. He was only concerned with the thought of whether it was likely that his father was still in the land of the living. He thought this could hardly be so.

Some note in the letter his father had left for him to read on his twenty-fourth birthday had struck an answering chord in his heart. He yearned towards that father. He would have been so glad to believe him still alive. But the simple affection which had actuated all that his father's letter to himself contained argued that were that father still this side of the grave he would write again.

Once more he perused the letter from the lawyers. "You are without doubt the son of George Gordon, and as such possibly the heir, or one of the heirs," he read, and there he halted.

It all brought back the thoughts he had worried upon as a boy concerning his mother and the little child with golden-brown hair whom she had brought once to see him at Doctor Pingle's. How distinctly he remembered every word the doctor had ever imparted to him of that mother. He had once admitted that the little girl whom she had brought that time was fair

and probably his half-sister only. This was doubtless the reason why Billings & Strong had not been positive as to whether he would be the sole heir, or only one of the heirs of George Gordon's uncle, in the event of his father's demise. That Doctor Pingle had spoken what he knew, when he confessed that the child they had seen—that fair little girl—was only half his sister, he felt convinced. If this were so, she belonged to that mother; she was hers—wholly. That mother had utterly disowned himself; he disowned that mother, and all that was hers. She had never had a place in his thoughts, as his father had,—and she never should have now.

Vaguely disturbed by the line of thought which the arrival of this letter had awakened, he dismissed the matter as best he could, after writing to Billings & Strong that he knew nothing whatsoever of his father. Their own letter, he told them, had given him his first intimation that George Gordon could by any possibility be still alive. He kept the whole affair to himself. He thought if he steadfastly refused to talk the matter over with Genevra, it would the sooner pass from his mind. It could not make him any happier; it could profit nothing, in its present state of incompleteness.

But the thoughts of it clung to him stubbornly, day after day, during all the following week of rambles at Genevra's side.

ROGER'S NEWS

The American mail seemed to skip him by when the mid-week steamer arrived in port, but the next one, as he had thought might be the case, brought him three of the home-messengers. One was from Strong & Billings, one from Teresa, and the third from Doctor Pingle.

He read Teresa's little sisterly note first. To her, Roger would ever be a distant star, on which she could gaze with a faithful love, which he would never suspect, never look to see. That never a word of this ecstasy, which had come to maturity in the young woman's breast, escaped in one of her letters argued exceptional strength of character in the girl and a remarkable sense of reserve. It was a pleasant little note she had sent. Roger tossed it aside, however, in a spirit of brotherly indifference.

From Billings & Strong he read: "*In re* estate of David Gordon, deceased, we have to inform you that your father, George Gordon, is known to be alive, at present somewhere in the United States. Have not been able to ascertain his whereabouts for this writing, but hope to do so for the next mail. If you learn of him, which seems highly probable, kindly communicate at once. Matter of inheritance still in abeyance."

With his hand to his cheek Roger stared into the corner of the room vacantly. He had felt a something like a dim foreboding that his father would prove to

be alive. He felt a strange sense of the nearness of this unknown parent. He presently felt a need as if for a freer breath of air. It was not to be had in the house.

With Doctor Pingle's letter, still unopened, held in his hand, he went out, and, passing through the street alone, walked away from all the houses on the road that went by the river leading to London.

He thought there might be further news of his father in the doctor's letter. There was. His kindly old friend and guardian had carefully prepared the way for his news, to break it easily. But Roger raced swiftly, in his reading, to what he wanted to find.

" Naturally I could not for a moment recognize my visitor," he read. " But at length I knew him for your father. He had come from San Francisco, which city was on his mind as the place of your birth to such an extent that I fear he may have returned there since. When he found you were not here, I had much difficulty in impressing upon him the fact that you are in England, and not in California. Lad, I have never touched one penny of the money you sent me, but as I had not the whole sum in the house, I could not give it into your father's hands. I am sorry I could not have done so, in the light of what has since occurred.

" After our long talk, which I must tell you, lad, was a little painful, I gave him all the ready cash I had by

me at the moment. This was before we went off to bed,—he in your old room, which I keep always as you left it. But in the morning he was gone. I wish I might be able to state to you where he has now wandered. I fear, as above written, that he has returned to San Francisco, where, of course, he saw you last. I fear I was hardly real to him, now, for my years have laid their hands upon me, to stoop my back and to unthatch my old poll. Had he seen more of my old self in me, mayhap he would not have thought so much on San Francisco. But I do not make certain he has gone in that direction. I have written of his visit here, and of my own fear, to those lawyers in New York City to whom I supplied your address. You may therefore hear from them soon."

VI

A PILGRIM

ROGER was staggered by what the lawyers and Doctor Pingle had written. His father was actually alive! His father! George Gordon, the man who left him as a child, for the love of a woman, was searching to find him! What sort of a father would he prove to be, if ever they two should meet?

A yearning first, and then a dread, and once more a yearning, possessed the boy. He was still a boy; he felt more like a little boy now, with this shadow of his father over him, than he had for years.

How was it that now this parent should arise, after all this time? What did he owe to this stranger whom he might meet at last? He had builded his life himself, apart from parents. His habit was not to have or to know any parents. All his life he had fought his battles, abandoned to whatsoever might result by father and mother alike. Had he learned they were dead, he could never have grieved. How should a son grieve who had never leaned upon this father, never had an opportunity to know or to love him?

Perhaps, he thought, the inheritance from David Gordon, falling now as it would into the hands of his father, would keep them apart, each to continue his

separate path. Did he wish to meet that father, or did he not? After all, he was his father, the author of his being, in whom there must have been a deep affection. What did it mean, this father's wandering away to San Francisco? Was he tugged by the strings of his heart?

He wondered what his father was like. Perhaps the man had suffered. What wifeless, childless spirit had he been, wandering somewhere all these years? What had it been that kept him silent so long?

He felt, in some strange, indefinable way, that his father needed him—called to him across some unknown abyss of years and space. He wondered if he owed his father a duty. How could he? What right had this parent now to summon his sympathy, his boyish love, left so to perish in his heart? As a boy Roger had been so alone; as a man he had been isolated, solitary. Yet he felt as if he were running to meet his father, childishly, with all the yearning in his breast impelling him onward. Right or wrong in his instinct, he loved that father, he cried to him, out of a loneliness which nothing had ever been able to satisfy in his being.

He was walking thus, aimlessly, rapidly. No thought was in his mind of where he was going. He observed nothing as he went. The path was one he had traversed often. It led under trees, over a stile,

and through a lane, where the trunk of a tree lay half concealed in a bramble growth by the hedge.

Roger knew of the old piece of tree. He had sat on it often with Genevra. But he came upon it before he was aware. He halted abruptly before it, for a wayfarer sat here now, and something about him arrested the younger man's attention.

The man looked old. He was bent, but his frame was large and strong. His clothing was shabby, his shoes were plated with dust and were broken at the toes. He had taken off his hat. On his bowed head the iron-gray hair, slightly wavy, was heavily massed.

As Gordon halted, the man looked up in the young fellow's face. Roger started as he steadily returned the gaze. The face that he saw was thin, apparently tanned dark brown, and stubbled with a few days' growth of iron-gray beard. There was an unfathomable look of sadness and longing expressed in the countenance.

"Excuse me, sir," said the stranger; "can you tell me if I'm close to this place here on the card,—Rosecroft, Datchet?"

The Harbertons lived at Rosecroft. Gordon echoed the name with a strange misgiving at his heart. He looked at the man before him, who had risen from his seat, with searching eyes. "Whom do you wish

to see at Rosecroft?" he asked, in suppressed excitement.

The stranger was looking at him eagerly. "I'd like to see a man," he said, in a voice that shook. "I'm hunting to find a man. He must be grown to a man by now. I'm hoping to find my boy—and his name is Roger Gordon."

Roger raised his hand to his cheek slowly. His eyes were wide, and almost wild in their look. His face took on that rechiselled look that came at times of deep emotion in his heart. He was searching the face before him—searching it with lightning-like rapidity—to find a father.

"I might have known it," he said, hoarsely. "I felt it—coming. My name—is Gordon—Roger Gordon. I am your boy."

The man suddenly sank down in a heap on the earth and threw his arm across the fallen tree. "My boy," he sobbed, convulsively, "my little baby boy. Found him at last—found my boy at last."

Roger felt a welling up in his heart of all the unspent emotions of his boyhood. All the affection he had so yearned to bestow surged like a flood in his being. He went and sat down on the ground beside the tattered, dusty figure, and placing his hand on his father's head, he patted the masses of hair boyishly, as he might have done had he been but a lad giving

comfort in nature's way. The story of an infinite tragedy had borne itself in upon him the moment he looked in his parent's face.

"You are tired," he said, presently. "You look tired—and hungry. We must go along home—somewhere, home."

The father turned his head, to look at the serious face so near his own. "My boy," he repeated, permitting the tears to flow across his cheeks unheeded. He put out a thin, large hand, that trembled, and laid it caressingly on Roger's face. "My boy, my boy," he crooned over and over again. "Let me stay right here, honey, I don't care for—anything—not for anything more. I can die now and never care again."

"Oh, no, no, no," said Roger. "Don't say a thing like that. You're tired, you're very tired; you must have walked very far. But now you will rest; you'll be strong and well——"

His father shook his head, smiling with an affection infinitely tender. "I'll never get well," he said. "I'll never get rested, little boy. I've found you. I've been living to find you, and walking and working so long —to tell you how I loved my little boy. Now I've found you—that's all. I've found you at last. My boy's a gentleman; my boy's got a heart—he's got a heart."

After a moment Roger said, "Don't, please, don't, any more. Let's go somewhere—home. I'll help you. I'll get you strong again. Won't you come?"

His father turned his head, with a strange little movement of listening. "Honey," he whispered, "your voice—just like your mother's—only kinder, more honest. Oh, Lord, my little boy, you don't scold your father—you don't, you don't. You can blame me, honey. I expected that, but I had to find you; I never could rest till I found my little boy again."

Roger waited patiently for the outburst of renewed emotion to pass. "I'll scold if you don't come home," he said, presently.

His father gave his head a vigorous shake. He stood up. His figure was bent, his shoulders were rounded. He tried to throw himself erect and to hold up his head. It was painful to see this struggle.

"I was once a man, like you," he told his son, "but I threw myself away. I couldn't help loving your mother—no, I couldn't. I loved my little boy, but she made me go away. That's what you can scold me for, honey. I don't mind—now."

He put his hand abruptly over his face and bowed his head on his breast. He seemed about to fall.

Roger advanced to him eagerly and took his arm in his strong, steady hands.

"Oh, you—you are a man," he said, catching tenderly at the straw of pride still remaining. "Come on, you are hungry and tired and sore. Don't think about anything just now but getting home, and then you can tell me—everything. If you want me to, I'll go and get a carriage—if you want to wait for me here. You are rich,—did you know it? Anything you want you can have."

His father was making an effort to keep up his head. "Money—ain't anything to me—now," he answered. "I found my little boy. I don't care for anything more. My boy—don't scold me—that's all I want in the world."

"Oh, won't you come,—father?" Roger begged.

The man, aroused by that word, made another effort, one of those struggles that it hurt Roger to see, but which made a thrill go through his heart. The man was trying to speak a better English, trying to hold himself as Roger did, manfully straight.

"Yes, I will," he answered. "I'll try to be a—credit to my son."

Roger saw how weak the traveller was. "Shall I go for a cab?" he said.

"No, honey, bless your heart," said his father, taking his arm," I reckon I walked mighty near all the way from New Orleans to San Francisco, and I reckon I can walk a little more."

"We can go slowly. Don't try to hurry," said Roger. "Rest another minute first."

The man looked at him with a hungry light in his eyes, as if he knew he would never catch up on the affection he had always so longed to bestow. There was also a shadow as of awakening pride, that made a little mark of seriousness on the furrowed brow. "Roger," he said, hesitating for a choice of words he had once employed, "I don't look—respectable." He stopped, and then added, "If only I could—have a bath, and something clean, I could walk better."

"Oh, never mind that, never mind," said Roger. "But if you would like to rest a little here, and would feel any better in something new, I could go and get some—clothing and bring the things back, and then we could go in the trees, near the river, and fix you up. Would you like to have me do that? Do you want to wait?"

"Yes, I'll wait," said the pilgrim. "But—you won't forget—to come back? Oh, I know you won't, my honey—I know you won't. But I couldn't—bear it now."

"No, I won't forget to come back," said Roger, gravely. "I couldn't. I never forget—anything. I'll come back, soon. Sit here and rest. I shall not be long."

He turned around as he came to the bend of the path, and waved his hand and smiled. But his heart was filled with a chaos of conflicting emotions. It was all so unreal, and yet so poignantly presented. He felt in one moment that he was the father himself; in the next that he was only a lad, awakening to an acquaintance with his parent.

He went by the most unfrequented streets, to avoid a possible meeting with Genevra. He could not bear to think of himself and her just at present. He purchased clothing, shoes, and food. With all these things in two bundles he hastened away to that path through the fields again, and came to the fallen tree.

His father was there. He was sitting on the ground, half reclining against the old tree-trunk, asleep. Nature had claimed this moment in which to restore somewhat of the strength he had used to exhaustion. On his care-worn face a little troubled look alternated with a wan smile. The marks of suffering, patiently borne, could not entirely obliterate the lines of refinement still to be seen.

Roger sat down quietly and waited. The sun shone warmly. The summer's last bee buzzed lazily in the grass. Roger's yearning was the thing the father saw when at last he opened his eyes.

When the man walked forth from the cover of trees at last, clothed and comforted anew, it seemed as if

he had shed the dusty shell of some former self and left it behind in the shadows.

The two walked but slowly back to the town. Roger knew of a house where rooms could be rented.

"Don't you care about me," said his father, when he sank in a chair at last. "I know I'll never get rested any more. I don't care, now—unless you are sorry—your father came. But I know you ain't,—I'm sorry I said it. I know you ain't. You never scold."

"I want you to go to sleep," said Roger. "And when you wake you can tell me—everything I've got to know."

VII

A STORY COMPLETED

THE story that George Gordon told fitted with painful consequence upon what Roger already knew of that run-away marriage, the mother's repudiation of himself, and the slavish indulgence which the man had been powerless to withhold against her whims, persuasions, and commands.

When San Francisco had been left behind, they had gone to Honolulu, and thence to Japan, according to the dictates of Bertha's fancy. For a year they had been irresponsibly happy in their wanderings. At the end of that time, when their money was almost entirely expended, they had started for Sydney, Australia. Bertha had then discovered she was about to become a mother once again. This and the state of their finances awakened in Bertha's nature a germ of hatred for her husband,—a thing which grew rapidly.

Bertha's child had been born on the ocean. It was a girl—a little golden-haired, fair-skinned mite, so pretty that even its mother was flattered by its advent. They named it Sunshine, and the father's heart was soothed a little where it ached for his first-born, so shamelessly abandoned.

Bertha had not been long confined in her berth.

She had never been ill on the sea, and on this occasion the ocean breezes quickly restored her strength. She and the little one became at once the idols of all on board. Then, when rougher weather had made her husband ill, the woman's loathing for him returned tenfold. She hated illness; she could not bear his haggard face. He had mended sufficiently to be again on deck before the steamer arrived at her destination. On the evening when the harbor was gained he had climbed to the upper deck, and was leaning against a railing when Bertha came to where he was.

"She came up, laughin' like her old honey self," said the man, relating the incident, a far-away, reminiscent look in his eyes. "Then, when I was feeling happy, she said, 'Oh, you are standing on my dress, git off!' And she gave me a push. The push didn't hurt, but I lost my balance and got a fall, down to the lower deck. That was the last I knew,—and I never saw her—never saw my little baby-girl again."

The remainder of his story was painful. The fall he had, the man related, not only rendered him wholly unconscious for the time, but it wrenched his spinal cord in such a manner that his brain was affected and one side of his body paralyzed. He could see, hear, and think confusedly, but his tongue had been locked in his head and the grip had departed from his muscles, even those which could still be moved. When, at

length, his faculties were somewhat restored, he had found himself in a lunatic asylum, where he was practically a prisoner.

He told of his partial return to strength. He had finally been dismissed as cured and was put to work with natives. He was thus shackled to labor before he was quite emancipated from the effects of his fall.

His memory had returned in fragments. He recalled San Francisco, with its fogs, and a little about his abandoned child, to find whom became the passion of his life. A few years only before his return to America he had learned that his wife sailed again to San Francisco, secured a divorce, and married a man who had travelled on the steamer with them on that final trip. He was a wealthy man. His name was James Chichester.

Finally, concealing himself on a steamer bound for New Orleans, Gordon had arrived once more in the United States. Discovered on the vessel, as soon as the voyage was fairly begun, he had at once been pressed into service. At New Orleans he secured employment as an ordinary laborer. He was saving his money and patching together his scraps of memory as fast as they came. He had believed that once in San Francisco he could find the old localities which memory refused to render back.

He had walked a great part of the distance to Cali-

fornia. Of his disappointment, when he came to the city of the Golden Gate and learned that Doctor Pingle had been gone for many years, he said but little. He had plodded onward once more, headed for Missouri, to find the child he had been compelled to abandon.

Roger knew the tale, or could readily supply what remained to be told, after that.

When it was complete, and his father lay asleep in the snow-white bed, the thought that haunted Gordon's mind was of that dimly remembered day when his mother came to Doctor Pingle with his sister, little Sunshine Gordon.

She was not a mere half, she was all his sister. That little white, fair-haired girl, untouched by the taint of a darkened skin, was the same flesh and blood as himself.

"Little Sunshine Gordon," he said to himself, time after time. And he wondered how she had fared—with that mother.

VIII

A CONCEPTION OF DUTY

A LITTLE wistful crooning as the next few days went by, a little yearning as he smiled at Roger, a word of happiness to Genevra when she called,—and George Gordon died.

"Getting rested, my honey, because you never scold," he said. "Found my boy at last." And he went to sleep.

Roger had hardly had time for the filial love potential in his breast to expand to its limitations. He had only commenced to become acquainted with his father, after the first up-welling of pity and longing which the man's arrival had occasioned, before all was over. But he had seen enough to understand why and how his father had been lovable in his youth. The gentleness, the anxiety to please, the almost child-like wish never to scold or to be scolded, had made the man unusual. But in the prime of an ordinary life, as he was when this end came so swiftly, George Gordon appeared loaded with years which had broken him in every way that a human being ever breaks. In his final repose, however, he reassumed the dignity of manhood and the beauty of features which had so potently attracted Bertha Neuville when first they

met. Roger saw, with some reason to wonder, that the still face was much more lightly touched with the tint of dark than was his own. He saw that to any casual observer there was not an indication of the African lineage behind this man. Apparently all of this, for the three of them, father, son, and little Sunshine, had come upon himself. But even this was behind him now.

The trials and pains of all this new element of melancholy in his life had served to cement more closely than ever, if possible, the ties between himself and Genevra. She had shown him before what a sweetheart and companion could be; she had shown him since that ineffably tender compassion of her latent maternity, in the simple, pretty little things she did for his father.

"Dearest," he said to her, when finally everything was concluded, save that last little stroll by the river, before the return to town, "I have thought and thought about my sister, and what I ought to do, and now I have at last decided that I shall be obliged to go to America, to find her and give her half of my father's inheritance. I don't see what else I can do. I could never be happy till that was done. So I want you to tell me I am right to go, and then in a month I shall be here once more, to claim my wife, and we will never part again."

"Oh, Roger," she said. "Return to America? Suppose anything should happen? Couldn't you have your solicitor manage the business just as well?"

"If I felt I could trust it to any one else, I would do so, gladly," said Roger. "But it is quite a worry. It's a thing that is on my mind day and night. I must do it, or have no peace. I have thought of every other plan, but this one I am sure is the best in every particular. I shan't be gone long. A few weeks, dear, and I shall be here again, and life will begin at last!"

"It's noble of you, big boy," she said, employing her latest name of endearment. "It's like you, dear—splendid and generous always,—but I can't—want you to go."

"There is nothing noble about it," he told her. "It seems more like a duty. It's almost a mania—somewhere in my brain. There must have been trials and —things in her life. I must do it before I can dare to be happy."

He wanted to cry out that Sunshine must have suffered a thousand things with such a mother; that through all he had undergone himself she seemed to call to him, helplessly and as one alone; that unless he went to her, doing what his sense of justice demanded, she might never receive what he deemed to be hers. But all of this he throttled. He could

utter no word against that mother. It was terrible enough to feel what he did.

He dreaded this duty far more greatly than he would ever have permitted Genevra to know. It was already a fever in his veins. To hasten across the ocean, to find Sunshine Gordon, give her the half of what he would own, and then to call himself free,—to live his own life, to go his own ways, —all this burned so hotly within him that he had no peace.

"But if anything should happen," said Genevra again, taking his arm and his hand, as they walked by the river. "Oh, dearest, I know you will go. I can feel it. I see how you think. But please, please don't remain long away. I don't wish to have you think me selfish. I want you to do noble things all your life, as you always have, but I love you so it is hard to give you up, even for a week. A month will be so long. You won't be gone more than a month, big boy?"

"Not so long as that, if I can possibly arrange to come back again sooner," he said. "I don't wish to go. I feel that I must. And you are always so thoughtful, so right. If love for you had not taught me the sweetness and the beauty of womanhood, I doubt if I should wish to go on this mission. When I know that you send me, out of the loveliness of your

own nature, how glad I shall be of the wonderful moment of turning to hasten back!"

"But you will never let anything happen?" she asked him yet again. "If anything should, it would break my heart. I could never forgive myself for letting you go. You are sure—absolutely sure—that you couldn't arrange it in some other way?"

"I shouldn't think of going if I could, to my own peace of mind," he replied. "No. I feel it is just to be my last little trial. There is nothing much left that could occur now. Everything has come that could, to affect my life. I shall soon be back, and then the whole world is ours—mine, for you are more than all the world."

She clung to his arm and held to his hand tightly as they walked. After a moment of silence she said,—

"Dearest, I want you to come back to me just as you are now. Please don't let anything change you, even a little. You are all mine now, just as I am all yours. I love you just as you are, my big boy, so honest, so kind, so pure in all your thoughts and deeds. I love everything there is in your nature. I shouldn't want one little thing removed or altered. It is so precious, so sacred, to have you the way you are. Promise me, dearest, you will be just the same when you come back and—kiss me again."

"I waited all those years, and loved you always,"

he told her, earnestly. "I should love you the same way, and be the same, in my hope to deserve you, even if I had to wait a hundred years more. I am more yours than ever. I love you more than ever I did. To-morrow I shall love you more than I can to-day. And the next day more than that. And so on, with every day in every year, till only eternity and all space can hold my love. I shall never change, precious, except to love you more. So when I turn homeward, you shall feel that I am coming, just as I shall feel the days grow sweeter and brighter. I am all yours, dearest, forever."

IX

THE UNESCAPABLE

ROGER carried away a last picture of London, with Genevra for its centre and a glimpse of all the others as a background. Lady Denby, always genuine, sent him a message of regard and a promise to have Genevra ready for the wedding. Lennox parted from his friend with a regret which had come with that strong affection in which he would hold his friend through any trials and disappointments of his own. Lady Fitzhenry, disdainful and already concerning herself with a lion more willing to be tamed, was more distant than a comparison with mere space could exemplify.

But after Genevra's sweet wishes and smiles on his journey, the next thing dear to the boyish heart that beat in Gordon's breast was the memory he was taking with him of Harberton's hopes to see him back with them soon, hopes actuated by a fondness which the older man had revealed as frankly as had Genevra herself.

So many years had passed since Roger's last trip upon the ocean that many things were novel to him now, and of absorbing interest. The passenger-list was a long one, so many belated Americans were has-

tening homeward after having remained abroad as long as time or finances would permit.

Thrown into company made up almost exclusively of his own countrymen and women, Gordon found himself regarded soon by questioning eyes, to the manner of the gaze of which he had long been unaccustomed. He thought at first there must be something peculiar about his manner of dress. Then the thing became clear so suddenly that a hot flame of color burned up in his bronze cheeks and his deep-set eyes denoted the recrudescence of galling memories. It was the tint of his skin that had marked him for notice. He realized that the country of his heart, his beloved America, would never be a haven of delights again. Boyhood will be happy, no matter what its passing anguishes; manhood loses its grasp upon the simpler joys and quickens its capacity for aches of the heart.

The habit of a solitary life had its advantages. Roger felt as utterly alone on that steamship, filled with its microcosm of a nation, as he might have done in Sahara. But he was not permitted to forget that despite his achievements, his wealth, and his culture, he belonged apart from his whiter brethren. When the seats were allotted at the tables, he had no place with his fellow-passengers. He found himself seated at a small table, specially provided, with another man in whose features, and darkened face as well, he recog-

nized the presence of that cogent force, the African blood. Too well balanced at last to permit humiliation to claim him for its own, he accepted the ruling of caste as a thing once again to be expected.

As he took the seat provided for him thus, Roger bowed, silently, to the man with whom he shared this isolation.

"How do you do, Mr. Gordon?" said the stranger, courteously. "I hope I may be allowed to introduce myself. My name is Jefferson Clark Jefferson. I took the liberty, which I trust you will pardon, of ascertaining your name. I knew we should be thrown somewhat frequently together."

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Jefferson, I am sure," said Roger. "It looks as if we may have a pleasant trip."

"I hope so," Mr. Jefferson replied, and then he said no more. Instinctively he felt that Gordon was unusually reserved.

Roger presently felt his reply had been cold. "Have you been in England long?" he asked, desirous of appearing more responsive.

"Only three or four months. I went there to elicit sympathy for the New Liberia movement," the other answered. "Perhaps you have heard of our work, or at least of our hope?"

"I fear I have overlooked it," Gordon confessed.

"I have been on the Continent until a few months ago. I am wofully behind, on reading the papers."

"There has been very little about it in print. It is not an important matter as yet. It may never be important," said Jefferson, with a smile as if hope had grown faint about his project. "There are only a few of us working. But at least I have interested a great philanthropist to some extent. He is providing a transport free of charge."

"Oh, I doubt if I understand just exactly what you want of a transport," Roger told him. "I am sorry to appear so ignorant."

"My trouble is in always presupposing that every one knows as much about our little scheme as I do myself," the other said, cheerfully. "A few of us believe that Africa—Liberia—is the place for the African. We have collected a colony together to try the experiment again. It failed somewhat before, but there seems to be no reason why it should fail always. And, as I say, at least I have secured free transportation from New York City to Liberia for all who will join in our pilgrimage, and we shall test our theoretical solution of the great problem as earnestly as possible, come what may."

"You mean that a number of people are going to Liberia—Africa—from America? I should think your project might be successful," Roger answered. "Do

you like England?" he added, after a moment's pause.

His new acquaintance knew from Gordon's abrupt change of the subject that something sensitive had been touched upon by their conversation. He had seen results like this before. He was a gentleman himself, with delicate instincts.

"England is a very beautiful country, especially in the summer," he said. And the subject of the problem dropped—for the moment.

X

THE PROBLEM OF A RACE

On shipboard the seriously minded soon find themselves sifted together in one little group, while the volatile-headed individuals just as certainly gravitate together in another, larger contingent. Roger and Jefferson formed even less than a group.

To Gordon, who had never thought upon a negro problem in his life, the aims and hopes of his friend became a fascinating topic. He liked the man, not only for his knowledge of and interest in what he termed his people, but also because of his personality. Jefferson was honest, earnest, broad-minded, and an altruist, self-designated to work for the race to which, by his color, he belonged. He was a college man, highly educated; he counted among his friends many of the most esteemed of America's citizens.

"But why should the negroes leave the United States?" said Roger, when the subject was broached again. "Why not educate them where they are, and make them better citizens,—I mean, citizens who will be able to take a higher place than at present in the nation's growth?"

"You see, so often book-education merely makes the negro a 'smarty,' to express it as I have heard it put,"

said Jefferson. "He is no longer contented then to be a workingman. He wishes to be like, and to associate with, the whites. That is impossible. On the other hand, if he is trained in industrial arts, even well, he must always be in a class by himself. He can never be assimilated. That is perhaps the most terrible part of it all. There are sometimes exceptions to the rule, but in America, part negro makes a man all negro, to all intents and purposes."

"I suppose you mean, the white people will not care to associate, in America, with a man whom they suspect of being even partially of African blood." Roger did not bring himself to say that easily.

"I mean that exactly," agreed Jefferson. "Almost a drop suffices to drag a man down to the ordinary negro level. That sounds brutal. The truth is often brutal. Then what can be done? In such circumstances how could a nation assimilate so vast a throng, even supposing the inclination existed, which is far from being the case? See, then, what an un-American institution must result, unless we go to Africa once more. Even granting that the best of education, which is that along industrial lines, be vouchsafed for our millions of negroes, they can never enjoy the caste of the whites. And could caste, such, for instance, as unmans India, be an American institution? I think

not. I see but one solution to the problem, and I fear that is almost impossible."

"Would they know what to do in Africa now, after all these years of acclimatization in another land?" said Gordon.

"Perhaps not. Some would. If we are really worthy, if there is a spark of greatness or a germ of evolution in us, we could build up a great nation in the country to which we belong. We have been given a start along the lines of a higher civilization. Can we work out our destiny along the lines of something truly heroic? If not, we shall fail in America as signally as we might in Africa. When the horde grows larger, when the lines of caste grow too irritating to be endured, when a pseudo-education has inflamed rather than enlightened the average negro mind, then the struggle will come, and our failure will be a tale of carnage instead of one of economics. I am one of the horde. I have wished a thousand times I might have been an Indian, but what I am that I must accept. I have seen some of the hordes, the great unleavened lump. It is no worse than many another lump,—London's, for instance. I have come to believe that those who talk most glibly of leavening the lump, no matter where, have never seen the lump. And I could not wish that any of them had."

Roger was amazed at this speech. It's frankness,

its confessions, the man's cried-out wish that he too might have been an Indian, as he himself had wished, awed him and made him think as he had never thought before.

"Then you don't think your present scheme will really leaven what you call the lump?" he said.

"I wish I could hope so," Jefferson answered. "I wish we could move the lump, at any rate. I am half a white man. I am all an American. God forgive me the boast, I think I love it more than many who are white all through. It will be a far, far better republic without us. I should weep in heaven, or hell, to see it blotted with another great stain of blood. But I fear it will come. I fear we will never go, in our millions. I fear they will one day wipe us out. Force, insolence, intolerance will grow as the lines of caste become deeper. I am all American. I love her well enough to go—well enough to take every one of us I can away!"

"Is it really so bad as that?" said Roger.

"What else can we think?" his friend replied. "The problem is there for solution. If we leave—all of us, certainly the thing is settled. What else can solve a question so profound? Religious training, to make us more amenable to regulations? No, I think not,—not while the conflict between morals and religion continues. We are already fanatically relig-

ious. Book-education? No. It could never be given, in the first place; it would utterly unfit us in the second. Industrial training? Not while we multiply and caste makes assimilation out of the question and a republic no longer possible. If we are worth the price of education, if we can rise to greatness, we are great enough to found an empire of our own."

XI

A BELATED DISCOVERY

THE morning of the last day out, after the steamer had indulged herself in rolling, like a horse turned out to pasture, a man appeared who had hardly stepped upon the deck a half-dozen times. He was staggering weakly from the cabin-door to a chair when Gordon took him by the arm impulsively and lent him his strength.

"It seems to me I have seen you before," said the man, when he had spoken his thanks and taken time to look at Gordon's face. "Are you not the gentleman who gave a recital in London, a few months ago,—your own composition,—'Paradise Lost'? Herr Comanche,—isn't that the name?"

Roger bowed slightly. "My professional name," he admitted. "Are you comfortable now? Do you think you'll be warm enough, wrapped like that?"

"Thank you, yes," said the stranger. "My name is Pallingham. I was there that night. I should be glad to know you better."

Gordon thanked him and shook the hand the man presented. The captain and a number of women came bearing down on the invalid, wherefore Roger said perhaps they should meet again, and moved away.

The man to whom he had rendered the merest little service proved to be a personage of some social importance. His title was the veriest sugar to catch the human flies aboard the vessel. And when these busy creatures had buzzed about the liner, from stem to stern, the all-unconscious Gordon had suddenly become someone whom all were sorry they had failed to discover sooner.

However, it was not absolutely too late even yet. The news went around that the concert that evening would be the finest of the voyage. That handsome, dark young gentleman was Herr Comanche, the composer of "Paradise Lost," and perhaps he would play.

Good-natured always, and never resentful, Roger consented to bring forth his violin for the entertainment of his fellow-passengers.

He played that evening, as he always played, these days since his life had been made happy, a theme that addressed itself to Genevra. Far away, over the heads of all his listeners, he gazed, back across all those thousands of miles of restless water, till Genevra's slumbrous eyes, so lustrous with her maidenly passion, greeted his message of devotion. What he played was new, though it told such an ancient story. Beautiful, vanishing forever into the air, and trailing away on the wake of the ship, it weaved its spell on his hearers with

that strange subtle art which characterized all that he did.

He played again, and yet again, before his fellow-passengers could let him go. He recognized the music-greed, and smiled to himself to see it level the high-held heads and sweep away the looks of social superiority.

But when he escaped, which he managed adroitly, he was not to be found for belated conversations. And when the liner reached her wharf, on the following morning, Roger was glad that Herr Comanche had been spared an earlier discovery.

After New York City had swallowed the handful of persons with whom he had travelled, Gordon realized that he would probably never see so much as one of all those passengers again, unless it might be Jefferson.

XII

A LONG SEARCH

THE problem of finding Sunshine Gordon somewhere in America had not presented itself to Roger in a concrete form on his way across the Atlantic. Indeed, it was not until after his interview with Billings & Strong that he realized fully the possibilities of labor in such a search.

It was months since the lawyers had been honored by the final visit of Bertha Chichester to their precincts. They were not aware of her present whereabouts; they doubted whether she still resided in New York City. Of her daughter they knew but little. They had made but one effort to find the mother, whom Billings had thought might be paid to furnish some manner of information concerning George Gordon, but this had been unsuccessful.

They were able to acquaint Roger with details of Bertha's effort to secure the inheritance, a bit of information which Strong made as vivid as it was concise. He then advised the employment of a private detective to conduct the search for Gordon's sister.

"I shall look around a little by myself," said Roger, "and doubtless I shall get such a man as you mention as well."

Confronted by the necessity for planning some manner of campaign, he soon began to realize the largeness of his task. It was something to go on, however, he thought, that Bertha Chichester had once called on the lawyers. At least, it argued that she had been in the city of New York. But then, it was not Bertha Chichester that he wished to find. Indeed, the thought of meeting her gave him anything but pleasure.

She had not, so far as his father had been able to tell him, abandoned Sunshine, as she had himself; nevertheless, it was so long since George Gordon had received any word of the two that almost anything could have happened since that time. The two might not be found together. However, he could not afford to ignore any chances which might lead to a rapid termination of the task he had come so far to perform.

Thinking out the features of the case, he comprehended another possibility which might not tend to simplify his labors. Sunshine might have any one of several names. He hardly thought it probable, still she might have been reared as Sunshine Gordon. It was far more likely, he thought, that her name was Sunshine Chichester. Yet, again, it was possible she might have been married. And if married, she might not reside in New York City, nor even in New York State.

He copied down the names and addresses of all the Gordons and Chichesters to be found in the city directory. He rented apartments in a private dwelling. The work commenced.

The weather was frequently forbidding, for the winter seemed to have decided on an early visit. On days when the rain was driven by the wind he remained indoors. During weeks that were fine, however, he tramped patiently from one address to another, till the Gordons, first, and then the Chichesters written on his list were nearly exhausted.

He discovered then he had used an old directory. Securing a newer edition, he discovered several new addresses. It was thus that he came at length to that house wherein the Chichesters had given their daughter a wedding reception.

"They ain't no Chichesters here," said the hall-man, with asperity, when Roger once more put his question.

"Thank you," said Gordon. "I doubtless made a mistake in copying down the number."

"No, you didn't make no mistake," corrected the man, less savagely. "They lived here once, but they never paid no rent, and Mr. Chichester kicked the bucket and the woman got the bounce."

Roger was out of touch with this vernacular. "Do you mean," he asked, "that Mr. Chichester died, and Mrs. Chichester moved elsewhere?"

"You guessed it right the first crack," said the man.

The fellow could not supply the particulars. That Chichester had gone in an apoplectic trance, induced by gulping his claret to stifle a particularly aggravating outburst of dyspepsia, could have made no material difference in Gordon's self-appointed task. However, Roger made innumerable inquiries of the hall-man, through none of which could he manage to secure a clue. Mrs. Chichester, when departing, had failed to furnish an address.

Roger was discouraged. He had begun to realize early that the month he had given himself in which to come, do his work, and return would not suffice. He was obliged to confess, in his letters to Genevra, that he might be obliged to remain at least four weeks where he was, which would make their separation at least of six or seven weeks' duration.

To add to the difficulties of his work in finding his sister, Billings & Strong required a great amount of his time in the adjustment of his business of inheritance.

He thought of Brooklyn as a portion of New York City which he had heretofore overlooked. Without affecting a change of head-quarters, to which Genevra's letters came with such an encouraging regularity, he went to work as he had done in the larger city, in

that vast field of houses across the river. It was at this time that he finally engaged a private detective to aid in the task. Day after day, however, the man reported no results.

November was gone, December was going. He could write no hopes of success. His time had been spent for nothing. A restlessness grew upon him. The weather drove him to shelter frequently; the hours thus hung heavily on his hands for days at a time. He thought of advertising in the papers for his sister. A personal notice was therefore inserted in several morning journals, but he waited in vain to receive a reply.

A relaxation became a necessity. Nervous over this maddening wait, so futile in every particular, he attended theatres and concerts night after night alone, and walked by the hour along the brilliantly lighted streets.

He found himself fascinated by the hundreds of negro, mulatto, and quadroon inhabitants who made of Sixth Avenue, from Thirty-fourth Street to Twenty-fifth Street, an African boulevard.

He found scores of these persons, male and female, whiter than himself; he recognized the brutal truth which Jefferson had spoken, "Part negro, all negro, in America."

This thing, together with his apparently never-to-

be-finished task, oppressed him. He had been away from England more than seven weeks already. Genevra was begging him in every letter to give it all over and return. "I am not very well," she wrote in one epistle. "What a dreadful distance it seems between us now." He feared she was dangerously ill. He almost dreaded to remain longer away. He sickened at the thought of how he was tempting the fates.

In despair he ran his advertisement for "Sunshine Gordon, or Sunshine Chichester" daily for more than a week. He felt he had then exhausted all his resources. He would give the affair just one week more. If nothing promised success at the end of that time, he would place the matter entirely in the hands of some trustworthy detective agency and sail again for England.

XIII

THE REWARD OF A SEARCH

AMERICA'S greatest metropolis, at the time of Gordon's visit, was teaching reformers to reform their methods. The arch-fanatic, in introducing violent disruptions of the scheme of metropolitan life, had lived to have his day and to witness somewhat of the horrors that followed. With moral powder he had wrought his havoc in the meeting-place of vice and human nature.

Explosions, however, cannot destroy matter. They merely scatter it widely. New York was a field sown broadcast with all the vicious fragments of what had been before the vicious mass of things deplorable. The streets were littered at night with these garish bits of tinsel and paint.

No man, howsoever impeccable his conduct or thought, could always be certain of escaping, unaccosted, from a stroll in attractive thoroughfares.

Gordon had found himself submitted to this experience soon after coming to New York City. He had grown to know the signs whereby the birds-of-night advertise their plumage.

More restless than before, now that at last he had fully decided to admit himself defeated and flee back



to Genevra, he paced his room or the streets till he often found himself exhausted. After a day of snow and frost, one of those final nights, which he was counting before he should turn his face to the East again, was clear and sharp. The hour was late, but heedless alike of that and the cold, he strode past the glittering shop-windows, decked already for the holidays, past the thinned-out stream of pedestrians, and past the intersecting streets, to the jangle of bells on the Broadway cars, and so came at last to Herald Square.

Above him the elevated trains rushed by like noisy comets, their vaporous tails of steam swirling down to the side-walks in great white billows. When he turned, he walked back, by way of Sixth Avenue. He found it less thickly populated to-night, less brilliantly lighted than the busier Broadway.

Absorbed as he was, nevertheless the man presently halted at the sound of music that came in squalls of melody from one of the side streets, at the corner of which a heap of dirty snow was piled. The wind was tossing the rollicking ditty from violins, banjos, and guitars. There was something barbarously catching in the tune and the lively manner of its execution.

Another strong breath of the harmony came on the breeze. Gordon turned, hesitated a moment, and then walked down the darker street, in the direction whence the kindling sounds proceeded. The theme was a mad-

dening invitation to dance. Involuntarily Roger was stepping to the time as he walked along, and swaying his head to the rhythm. He paused at length before a house, through an uncurtained window of which he could see a large number of negroes dancing.

He stood there on the curb, unconsciously clicking his heels on a bit of ice. His eyes were lighted with pleasure, ungovernable when music called with a beat in such frolicsome measure.

While this momentary spell was at its height, and Gordon stood there absorbed, a young woman, slender and cold-looking, passed him by, casting a glance half-heartedly at his face as she went. She presently paused, looked at him timidly again, went on a trifle farther, and paused again. Her face was pretty, but a look of alarm was in her eyes, as if she feared herself.

As Gordon made no sign that he saw her at all, she moved ahead, casting a backward glance twice or thrice, till at length she came to a shadow, where she once more hesitated.

Roger had not particularly noticed her, so preoccupied had the music made his senses. Up the walk came another, a brisker young woman, however, who was not to be readily ignored. She walked nearly under Gordon's chin.

"Hello, darling!" she said.



THE INEVITABLE

He cast a single look in her face. Almost falling, as he took a backward step from the height of the curb to the street, he turned away abruptly.

"Say, lovey," began the girl, but he heard no more.

He left her swiftly behind as he beat a retreat across the way, and down on the farther sidewalk, in the opposite direction to that in which she was strolling. He hastened onward, till the shadow of a darkened building shielded him from view, and there he halted.

"It served me right," he muttered. "I ought to be at home."

He saw that bolder young woman go on towards Sixth Avenue, and beheld her stop, to address a word to that other, more timid one, who had paused at the end of the block. The one thus accosted came a little forward and appeared reluctantly to receive something which the other young woman tendered. A moment later she crossed the street, to the side whereon Gordon was standing, and slowly came back alone.

He waited, aware he would not be seen in the mask of gloom to which he had fled. He watched the girl, who came towards him, as if uncertainly. He noted how slender and supple was her figure, how well she carried her head. She passed beneath the light of a lamp, and even at the distance he could see that her face was sad. He also saw that she shivered with the

cold. Her face was delicate, refined; above all, it was wistful. He observed her brush a tear from her cheek and compress her lips together as she neared a second street-lamp, flickering in the breeze.

Nearly in front of where he stood she came to a halt and looked at something which she held in her hand. Gordon could see her features plainly. He felt himself unaccountably affected by her evident distress. She raised her hand to her cheek, in a gesture of resignation and despair. She shivered again, and, looking at what she held in her fingers, permitted the object to fall to the ground. Gordon saw that it was money,—a paper bill.

The girl wrung her hands, as a child might have done, looking at the bill where it lay on the snow. A moan escaped from her lips. She moved away, leaving the money. Gordon made a trifling noise. She started, like a doe discovered in the open. He came from the shadow towards her, as one in a dream.

"You seem to be in trouble," he said, in a voice so husky that it sounded strange to himself. "You—have dropped your money."

The girl glanced timidly up in his face for a second, a dumb light of fear and dread in her eyes. He stood with his back to the light. She was not aware that his skin was dark.

"It doesn't matter," she said, in a voice that shook



with her trembling. "Please—I don't wish to stay here. I'd rather go—alone."

"I haven't the slightest wish to detain you," said Gordon. "But you seem—so young. I saw you—saw that other one—give you the money, and you must need it—need money. It seems such a pity. You don't seem quite like—— It seems too bad."

She looked once more in his face, as if she yearned for sympathy, yearned for some one to trust. Then her head came forward and hung till he could no longer see her face, and she cried, inaudibly. "Please—don't stop—me," she finally managed to say. "I don't—want that—kind of money. I—didn't wish—to take it. She tried—to be kind. I would rather—go."

"God help you, I am glad you wish to go," he said. "But there is other money,—something might be done. Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me where you are going—where——"

"I am going—to the—river," she answered him, brokenly. "I'd rather—I'd rather. Oh, why do you stop to speak—to me?"

"I don't know," Roger said. "It seems—too bad, that's all. But—don't go to the river. You must have a mother to go to."

"A mother?" said the girl, suddenly, in a strange mood. She made a sound of laughing. "I had one—a pretty little mother, but she—and all the others—left

me to go,—they made me go—and it wasn't my fault—oh, it wasn't! it wasn't! It had to be his! It had to! And then it died—and I was all alone."

"I don't know what you mean," Gordon told her, awed by this half-told story. "Your mother, everybody, left you to go? What was it that wasn't your fault?"

"Why do you ask me?" she answered, in a mood of pride, not yet all eliminated from her spirit. "I didn't want to tell you that. I don't want to tell—any more. I'll go—I wish to go. I don't know who you are. I'd rather go."

Another gust of that music from up the street came rippling on the wind. But Gordon failed to hear it now.

"You needn't tell," he said. "I don't know why I asked. I couldn't help it. I don't know why I stay. I'm sorry, though. You needn't tell."

The girl began again to cry. Her heart was breaking to tell its story.

"My husband," she faltered, "said—my baby—wasn't his,—but it was—it was! And they turned me out—he drove me away—and I nearly starved. I tried to get some work—oh, you don't know how hard—I fainted on the street—and a woman took me in. She wasn't good, but she was kind, the only kind person of them all, and she got me well—and then—I was



there in her house. I couldn't help myself,—I couldn't go anywhere else,—no one would believe me. But I have never been—out like this before, and I can't—I can't—I would rather die! They drove me out—they made me do it all—and I'd rather go to the river." She sobbed convulsively, but her sobbing still made no sound.

Roger was frightened at all she had said, in some vague, indefinable way. He had spoken to her; he had remained there against his will. He could not seem to leave her and go on his own way.

"But you don't have to go to the river," he told her now. "I wouldn't do that. I'll lend you some money, if that will help you to try again. I don't know why, but I will."

"Perhaps you wouldn't if you knew—what it was," she said, wistfully. "But it wasn't my fault. I was good, and my poor little baby was his. It had to be his! But something—terrible—was the matter."

"What was the matter?" he asked her, simply.

"My baby was black," she answered, obediently.

"Black!" He put his hand to his cheek as he echoed the word.

"But it wasn't my fault," she reiterated, wildly; "it wasn't! oh, it wasn't! I knew you wouldn't believe me. I knew you couldn't! Nobody ever believes me,—not even mamma—my mother. They called it



a nigger. He made me take it and go away,—they made me go. And I knew you wouldn't believe me. So now I can go." She looked in his face as a child might have done, a serious little pucker between her eyes.

He could make no reply for the moment.

"But I would like to say—thank you," she faltered. "I'd like to say—good-by to—to somebody—nice. I wanted somebody to know—I tried—I really tried—to be good. Good-by."

"Wait," said Roger, huskily. "Don't go—yet. I do believe you tell the truth. Tell me, what was your husband's name?"

"I don't—wish to tell," she answered.

"I wish you would," he said, eagerly. "Do you think he might have had any colored blood in his veins?"

She shook her head.

"No, no, he hadn't. That's why he made me go."

"Then it might have come down through your parents," he said, speaking in feverish haste, and as if to himself. "Will you tell me your father's name?"

"No," she said, smiling faintly. "Why should I? I would rather not?"

"Nor your mother's?"

"Poor pretty little mother," she answered, and she shook her head.



Gordon was suppressing a most intense excitement, amounting to agony.

"Then, of course, it is of no use to ask your own," he said, hoarsely.

"My name is so cheerful," she said, a little archly. "It is Sunshine."

"Sunshine!" he cried out. "Oh, no! no! no! not that! not that!—not with all this story! Oh, no! no! no!—not Sunshine Gordon!—no!—no, no, no,—I couldn't bear—— But it is—it had to be—it had to be Sunshine Gordon. Oh, why—oh, why——"

"Why, what is the name to you?" she asked, in affright at his anguish. "Of course I am not Sunshine Gordon. I don't understand."

Roger looked at her hazily. With his hand to his cheek he weaved back and forth, as if in pain. "Sunshine—Chichester, then," he said, patiently.

She sounded a little cry. "But who are you—what do you mean?" she suddenly asked.

A burst of that soulless music came dancing joyously on the wind.

"I mean," he said resignedly, "that I know you better than you know yourself. Your mother was Bertha Neuville; your father was George Gordon—quadroon. Your baby was black for the very same reason that I am black,—because of the blackness in the blood."



" I—can't believe it," she said, as she looked at him wildly. " How could you know? Tell me who you are."

He heard nothing distinctly.

" Put your hand on my arm," he said, huskily, " and let us go. I came to find you."

" But I can't. You must tell me who you are," she repeated, drawing away in alarm and awe.

" I am your brother," he said. " Come, Sunshine, you are trembling with the cold."



XIV

CAUSE AND EFFECT COME FACE TO FACE

WHEN the morning broke Gordon was sitting at a desk in his room, gazing vacantly at a letter he had written to Genevra. He had also telegraphed to Doctor Pingle to bring Teresa to care for his sister. His head was still troubled with schemes for Sunshine's life and future.

His lips were drawn and thin; his features were retaining, for a long time, that rechiselled appearance that came to them now and again, but seldom with such a look of chill as now.

At last he arose from the chair and paced the room. Reaction broke in upon him abruptly. He burst into laughter, fearful to hear. Peal after peal rang out, mockingly. His muscular frame was shaken in a long succession of shivers. The sound, when it ended, went like the chatter of despair.

In silence again he continued his pacing up and down the floor. His gaze wandered blankly from one dull object to another in the place. The room was cold, but he felt nothing. The world was stirring again outside, its roar increasing steadily; he heard no sounds. He paced up and down till the hour for breakfast came and went; he knew no hunger.



CAUSE AND EFFECT

How long he had walked he could never have told. How long he might have continued so to stride up and down could not have been determined. His state of mind was invaded at last when for the third time a loud knock was repeated on his door.

When he swung the barrier open he found himself confronted as if by a picture. The hall was slightly dark. Projected on its dim, uncertain wall, and framed about by the lintels, was a daintily pretty woman, *petite* and smiling. She had soft, silvery masses of hair about a round, animated face. Her laughing eyes were of the deepest violet blue.

"Good-morning," she said, in a bright, winsome voice. "I am delighted to see you," and she came in the room. "You must be—you are Mr. Gordon."

"My name is Gordon," Roger replied, a puzzled expression on his face. "But I fear I do not——"

"Oh, dear, don't you know me?" cried the lady, laughing in the mellowest of voices. "Oh, how very ungrateful not to guess how you came to be so handsome—for you are—oh, you are. I think you are charming. I am ever so proud of you, really." She held out her hand engagingly.

Gordon intended no slight, but he failed to see her hand. His eyes could not apparently leave her face.

"Oh, you naughty, handsome boy," she pouted. "You've got to know your own little mamma."



He started. He winked his eyes rapidly. He passed his hand across his forehead.

"Yes," he finally said, as if to himself, "I know you now. I remember the mocking face, and the laugh, without any laugh inside. I wonder what you want."

"What do I want?" echoed Bertha, slightly shrinking back from his cold, hard gaze, but laughing nervously. "Oh, Roger, you mean, mean boy, to treat your poor little mother like that, when she comes to see you so sweetly, and wants to love you so dearly."

He looked at her steadily, out of his deep-set eyes. His gaze seemed to pierce her through. She felt a horrible sense of discomfort. He seemed about to speak several times. And then he merely uttered the one word,—

"You!"

"Oh, you cruel boy," she pouted, complainingly, masking as best she could the fear he compelled in her breast. "To think of my own dear boy talking like that to his mother, when she comes so early in the morning and tries to be cheerful and pretty. Oh, I know you never meant to be so cruel. I forgive you, dear. I have been away from town, but I came to answer your advertisement—there. So you couldn't help loving me—just a little."

He stared at her, saying nothing. There was so much that he wished to say that he could not begin.

Where the tale of wrongs commenced was so far, far back.

"Don't you want me to tell you where Sunshine is?" she asked, weakly.

"I found her, where all of you put her,—on the street, last night," he said. "You abandoned me. I could almost have forgiven you that. Perhaps you did me a kindness,—I think you did. But to let that child bear all that infamy,—to cast her out, when you knew you were responsible yourself for that black little face—that you were the one that married negro blood —oh, that was a monstrous thing to do! You never told her she had a right to have a black little baby. You knew it! You knew it, and yet you shut her out, with such a blot of shame as that, to bear alone. I thought I despised you for myself, for what you did to me! O God, what shall I say to this woman? You can come to tell me where she is, without a blush of shame?"

Bertha suddenly hated as much as she feared him. Her face was no longer smiling. Something hideously malignant burned in her eyes. "What do you mean by this?" she demanded. "How dare you speak to me like this? What you say is all a lie—a nasty lie!"

"But at least I know who her husband was," he resumed, unheeding her interruption. "I can let him know what you are. I can tell him what you did. He



shall know you were married to a quadroon. He shall realize it was not her fault that her child was black. But neither he nor you shall see her again. Go away —leave me. I cannot bear to see you. I might have forgiven for myself. I have hoped that I could. O God, I have hoped it so! But you—you pariah of motherhood—you soulless creature—what an outcast you are from all chance of filial affection!"

"You nigger!" she cried. "You nigger! How dare you! Beast! I hate you! I loathe you—nigger!" She choked with impotent rage.

He opened the door. "Go away," he said. "You have made some mistake. We never had a mother."

She could not remain and face his gaze. She was blazing with wrath, as she backed out at the door. But some one was passing in the hall,—a man who roomed in the house. She looked at the stranger, smiling at once. "I must really be going," she said, for the other man to hear. "By-by." And the man turned to see who it was that had such a sweet, mellow voice.

XV

NEWS FROM ENGLAND

It had been a something akin to instinct that prompted Roger to send for Teresa to care for his sister. He had thought of no one else; there was no one so appropriate, so reliable, so certain to respond. He knew she would come.

Without procuring a breakfast he went to his sister. Sunshine had read the paper left by George Gordon. She knew what Roger had told her was the truth; she was only too well convinced of who and what she was. She accepted it all in patience and without complaint, but she was shrinkingly ashamed and burning with mortification whenever her brother's eyes were directed towards her face. He noted this presently, and talked with his gaze averted.

The girl's countenance was one of those human sorrow-coins, stamped with the ineradicable signs which mental and physical anguish design. Yet its girlish sweetness and innocence were still in a manner untouched. Her family resemblance to Roger was marked, particularly about her brow and the contour of her cheek.

Already she felt for him all that sense of attachment which protection compels. To have found a brother,



at a time when there was no one—absolutely no one in her life to whom to turn, would have been sufficient to awaken her child-like affection, but Roger had been kind before he knew. Whenever he turned his serious, half-sad eyes away, she was watching him, wistfully, earnestly, with that odd little pucker between her brows.

He told her of what he had done to provide her with a woman companion, and explained who Teresa and Doctor Pingle were. Of the morning's interview with their mother he said nothing. She supplied him with Robert Dunn's address, and he wrote to that gentleman a letter of explanation to account for all that had happened. Sunshine would have shrunk from this, but she thanked him and knew he was right.

Doctor Pingle and Teresa could not arrive, as Gordon knew, before two days or more. In the mean time he moved to a small hotel and secured apartments for Sunshine and Teresa, as well as a room for himself and another for Doctor Pingle.

On the following day a telegram arrived, announcing that the two were half-way there.

That same afternoon he received a cable from England.

"Health not good," it read. "We sail for New York to-day.—Genevra."

He held the paper in his hand, reading it time after

time. At length a peculiar little smile appeared on his face. He folded the message and placed it in his pocket.

There was nothing to do but to wait, in patience, for his friends from the West to arrive. When the hour was come he went to the station alone. They had never known anything about his sister; he much preferred to have them meet her more quietly than was possible at the train.

He was walking rapidly towards the platform at which the train would stop, when some one quietly grasped his arm. He turned about and saw his fellow-ocean-traveller, Jefferson, walking beside him and smiling in the pleasure of the meeting.

"Not going my way again by any chance, are you, Mr. Gordon?" said the man.

"No, only to meet some friends," answered Roger. "Where are you bound for now?"

"New Haven and Bridgeport, only for one or two days," said Jefferson. "I am winding up the last few details of the business. Our ship is in port, getting ready. She sails in two weeks from to-morrow."

"I am glad you have been so successful," said Gordon. He spoke clearly enough, but his thoughts were wandering. He preferred, for some reason of his own, not to have his friend Jefferson see him meet Teresa. "I wish you luck," he added.

"Perhaps we shall meet again," said his friend. "If not, good-by."

"Good-by," said Roger, and, taking the hand that Jefferson extended, he hastened on to where a train came rolling in and halted.

He saw them then presently, struggling with hand-baggage, climbing down the steps of the car and looking about them in that way of new arrivals, confused and uncertain as to which way to turn.

"Here we are, Dosser," he said, as he came upon them before they had even so much as looked in his direction. "I am so glad to see you—you and Teresa."

The two turned at once. The doctor was staring at him in amazement over the rims of his glasses.

"Well!" he said. "Well!—well, bless my soul! Well, you—well, I declare, you—big fellow! Well, God bless you, laddie! Is it really you?"

For the moment Roger was a boy again. He held his hat in his hand and with the other shook the doctor's hand as if he could never get enough of that good, warm clasp. He looked at them both, one after another, as he tried to laugh and to talk and to hold his emotions all in check at once.

Teresa was looking at him shyly, but with eyes that burned. Her breath came fast; the color mounted in her cheeks. She had grown up tall, slender, lady-like, and attractive. Her face was not so dark as Roger's,



but her features, while pleasant, were not at all of that classical mould which had been a characterization of Gordon's always. She had steady brown eyes, an oval face, abundant black hair that was almost straight, and an air of modesty which Roger observed with a feeling of profound relief and thankfulness.

" I was glad to come, Mr. Gordon," she said, timidly, as she placed her hand in Roger's for a second; " but I didn't realize how far it was."

He clutched up their bags and bundles as they talked of these nothings of greeting, and led them away to a carriage.

XVI

THE RIGHT OF LOVE

DAYS of suspense, like those of suffering, are more than twenty-four hours in length. The knowledge of this was not at all new to Gordon. Nevertheless, the week went by, and the steamer with Harberton and Genevra was due at last.

The meeting down at the pier afforded a happy little moment for Genevra, whom sea-air and hope and this sight of Roger had restored to all her health and brightness and life once more, as if by magic.

She seemed to Roger more beautiful than ever. The color glowed in her face as if from vestal-virgin fires, made rosier by the consciousness of love. Her lustrous, warm-gray eyes were ablaze with joy. Her nugget-gold hair, with the winter's afternoon sun upon it, seemed but the halo due to her beauty. Through her red, fresh lips her little hot catches of breath fanned swiftly. She had never seemed so happy, so sure of love's favor as now.

Roger looked at her yearningly. The beat of his heart had quickened when she put her two little hands in his and cried to him out of her sweet delight. To Gordon all eternity passed while he lived for that

moment of looking in her eyes, where love was so silently eloquent.

"Roger, I believe I missed you more than Genevra did, upon my word," said Harberton, candidly glad to see him again. "Now, sir, can you book on this steamer back to England again with us when she sails?"

Gordon came back to realities at once. He made a laughing answer that was apparently a natural and not an intended evasion of the question.

"The first thing to do," he added, "is to get your luggage under way to the hotel."

He therefore left them for the moment, and hustling about, with his unforgotten American celerity of movement and resource, at length returned to tell them that all was arranged.

As they drove away from the landing, Genevra's hand fell softly down on Roger's and rested there, content. He left them, when they were finally lodged, with a promise to Genevra to return so soon as he knew she had taken a rest.

"If you don't make haste coming back," she warned him, "the rest will not be a rest at all."

"I shall have no rest myself till I come," he told her, smiling oddly, but it was long after dark before he turned his footsteps towards the hotel where she waited.



THE INEVITABLE

The night was cold and wet. The wind blew fitfully. The sky was sullenly low and dark. What rain fell froze on the streets, buildings, and sidewalks.

Gordon, as he walked, seemed insensible to the cold. His face appeared re-refined by the chill and bite in the air.

But a semitropical warmth and fragrance breathed from the parlor, when at length the door was opened and Genevra stood before him, her eyes ablaze with welcome and love, her bosom heaving with her happiness and deeply stirred emotions.

He closed the door behind him. She had stepped a little back, to let him enter. Now she came towards him slowly, prolonging that moment more of separation, a happy one at last. But her love had leaped from her eyes, unleashed, and she followed it swiftly, running to his arms with a glad little cry from her beating heart.

"Oh dearest, dearest, dearest," she crooned, and, laughing and crying together, she nestled to his shoulder and patted his hands, and kissed him and nestled again, and twined her arms about his neck to draw his cold cheek down to her own soft, hot one, so burning for caresses. "Oh, dearest love," she sighed. "At last—at last."

Roger could not speak at first. Then presently he called her name, over and over again, as he held her



fast in his arms and looked in her eyes. His yearning was something she felt. It almost awed her. It made her quiet. It made her take his face in her hands and kiss him fondly.

"It is I, dear," she whispered, as if she comprehended something in his mood. "All yours—forever. Oh, my love, my dearest, I had to come. I couldn't endure it any longer."

Her arms crept about his neck once more and she lay close to his heart, her joy made absolute thus to have him hold her fast.

At last she clasped both his hands in hers and, holding herself away the length of her arms, gave herself the long, long look for which she had so hungered and thirsted since their parting. And still Roger could hardly say more than her name.

"Oh, dearest, you didn't expect me to come," she said. "But I wasn't well, really, big boy. I was so lonesome—for you. And papa proposed it, bless him! so we came. And I am so glad we did. Dearest, I was so afraid something might happen. I want you to tell me you are glad to see me, dearest boy, as I am to have you so close again."

For his answer he held her once more to his heart and kissed her, and looked in her eyes with a yearning greater than infinity.

"Forgive me for being so selfish," she said to him

then. "I haven't asked you anything about your long, long search. Tell me, dear, have you found your sister since you wrote to me last?"

The moment in his life had come.

"Dearest," he said, huskily, "I have found my sister at last. But—it's a long—unhappy story. You must sit by the fire and let me tell you. It—is hard to tell."

"But, Roger, dear," she said, "it isn't terrible? Oh, nothing has happened, that you smile like that? Dearest, you are glad to see me?"—glad I came?"

"You are the one glimpse of heaven I never expected to see again," he told her, simply.

"Roger! Never expected to see—me again?" she cried, in sudden fear. "But, dearest, what have I done?"

"You, precious? Oh, don't say such a thing as that. You have done nothing—nothing but to give me a happiness too great to last—and a hope too good to be true."

"But tell me—tell me," she said, in affright, "what does it mean? Your sister isn't dead?"

"No—not dead."

"Then what can it be? Have you lost your fortune? Dearest, what do we care for that? I don't mind any sort of poverty—with you."

"I wish it were that," he said. "It isn't the for-



tune. Oh, if it had only been that! No, it is far more than that I have lost. I have lost the right to make you mine. Not the right to love you—no, no—I shall never lose that!—but the right to make you my wife. That has gone—forever."

"Roger!" she cried. "Oh, I don't know what you mean! There isn't any right in the world but my wish —my love. There couldn't be anything else but that! Nothing—nobody has any rights for us but you and me!"

"Dearest, wait," he pleaded. "I must tell you all about it,—how I found my sister a few days ago. I wrote you a letter, but it couldn't arrive in time. I'll tell you everything, and then you will know—I have lost—my right. I know I might have written it all again to you here, but I couldn't. I had to see you this one time more. I had to hear your voice. I had to hold you in my arms—this once. I had to tell you I love you, and love you—forever."

"Oh, Roger," she said, in a new terror of his stern, set face, "tell me—what it means. It's a terrible dream. It can't be true—when we love each other so. Tell me, dearest, you are joking?"

"Sit here and let me kneel beside you on the floor," he said. "I can tell you better."

He dared not wait to let her speak again. He told her, swiftly, plainly, of the shame which had come to



his sister—come in her innocence—come from the thoughtlessness, the selfishness of one vain woman who had once had her way.

"Genevra," he said, when the brief history was ended, "how could I be a man and make you my wife—after this? How could I so tarnish you—taint you—and start a new line of such misery and crime? No, no, no,—I couldn't—I couldn't—not while I love you as I love you now!"

"But oh, oh, Roger," she said, crying, "I love you so. You don't understand. I love you with all my life, and all my honor, and all my right to live! And if I don't mind, who in all the world can say we haven't the right? Hasn't love any rights? Dearest, when I tell you I would rather lose heaven—and God—than to lose you now, is there anything else that can say we haven't the right?"

"There is—God help us—there is," he groaned. "We are two responsible creatures. We can't live only for ourselves—we can't. We haven't the right to thrust existence on any creature that chance might damn—that way—again. God knows how far from us that woolly hair, that black little face, might come again, and bring its shame. Oh, no, no, no! Is all this anguish to go for nothing? Is more of this shame to hound the innocent again? Not from me! not from me! I can die—I can even live, and suffer—but



this thing—never! Genevra, I love you so much I can let you go, so much I can suffer, so much it will last through time itself, so much that God might be jealous, but I have lost the right—I never, never had the right—to make you mine!"

Genevra was awed. Her heart sank. She realized something which thought could not have formulated. She loved him more than she ever had. She could not believe he was tearing out his heart like this.

"Dearest," she said, in a voice that faltered, "I never—thought of all—that, because I love you so. It would be—very hard—to say—good-by. How could I say—that, dearest? I love you so—I love you so." Clinging to him, with a little shiver, she placed her cheek against his arm and cried for the burden that lay thus so soon upon her heart.

At length he lifted her gently into the hold of her chair and stood before her, looking sadly into her eyes. His face had taken on an older expression, not as of age, but rather as of maturity in sorrow.

"Dearest, I must go," he said, with a wan smile playing on his lips. "I have hurt your life. I have killed the greatest hope that a man ever had. Now there is nothing left—but—good-by. Oh, Genevra, some time try to forgive me; some time remember I didn't wish to do it—that I love you—love you—love you till my heart will break!"



"Oh, my big boy—please," she sobbed, "please don't —please don't say—anything—like that."

"God bless you, sweetheart," he murmured. He knelt down and kissed her hand. She seemed so helpless, so stricken, as she sat there gazing at him wildly, dumbly.

"Good-by, Genevra," he said, in a moment.

She started up and clung to him fondly, in despair. "Oh Roger," she said to him, "I don't know how I can let you go. It does seem as if in England we might still be happy—be right in our love. No one there could care—as they might over here. It does seem as if there is some way—some way we could make it right. I don't know what I shall do. I can't—let you go—never—never to—have you—again. I love you so. Dearest, I would follow you—anywhere, barefooted—hungry—anything—only to see you—to know that you love me. Oh, Roger, I can't—I can't—I can't give you up. I would rather die!"

He tried to speak, but failed. At length he said, hoarsely,—

"Yes, I know. Oh, God, I have thought of that! It would be so easy—to die. It takes so much courage —to live."

She looked at him in the awe of a fearful thought.

"We could—die—together," she whispered, in affright at herself.

"No, no—we mustn't!" he said, passionately. "Genevra, help me to do what I must do, and help me to live—to wish to live. Shame me—for my faltering manhood. Shame me, dear, shame me. Save me from that. Don't let me lose this struggle. Help me now—now, when I need it most."

She was psychically driven to obey—psychically purged of her dreadful thought. She went to the table unsteadily, and took up his hat. She kissed it, as she came blindly towards him.

"Oh, dearest—our love," she said, brokenly. "I don't — see how — I can. Our love — our hopes — and—'Paradise Regained'—you promised that—you promised you'd come back—to me—and write me—that."

"I—can never—never write it—now," he said. "Oh, God, oh, Genevra,—both of you—send me away. Help me, help me! If you love me, send me now."

She steadied herself, peculiarly. She came and kissed him on the forehead.

"Go, dearest," she whispered. "Go, dear love, with all—my heart—and my—life—forever."

He held her tenderly for a moment, waiting till he could speak again.

"Good-by, precious," he said, at last, and he kissed her on the lips.

" Good-by," she whispered, and let him slip from her clinging arms. Then she grasped the chair.

At the door he looked back, for one second of silence. Then he closed it behind him—and was gone.

She looked for a moment on the blank surface of the panels.

" Oh, Roger, I can't let you go!" she cried, in anguish, and, staggering forward to call him back, she sank to the floor.

* * * * * *



XVII

THE INEVITABLE

ROGER GORDON knew when he boarded the huge Liberian ship that he was doing the only thing there was to do. And yet to him the vessel was a great black monster, straining at her moorings as if eager to part him forever from Genevra. From the funnel a cloud of smoke was pouring so dense that it blotted out the sun from time to time, casting prodigious shadows on the mass of humanity gathered on the pier.

The shadow fell on Genevra's face, as she stood there looking so steadfastly upward to where he was. Focussed as all of Gordon's senses were, on her sweet, dilated eyes, he noted, sub-consciously, what a vast majority of the faces to be seen were black. He saw what a motley throng it was that surrounded her, gathered together for the last good-bys. Old men were there, in heterogeneous garb, beside stylish young women. A bent old colored woman, leaning on a huge umbrella, cried. Next her in the crowd three stout young negroes were dancing and laughing.

Eagerness and questioning of fate dominated all about where Gordon stood on the deck. Hope for the race of blacks, sense of prophecy, ambition for the project, wrought a thousand expressions. Liberia,—



something of their own,—a land in which they should prove their worth and found a new republic, was the dream of this handful of earnest men and women.

A white-faced fellow, with features more negroesque than those of many of the darker men, was the one who, at a signal, tossed the last big hawser from a stanchion, as the other lines were hauled aboard.

The ship swung off.

Genevra's anguish shot through her heart. She saw nothing but Roger, modelled in bold relief against the background of a thousand men. On his right was Teresa, on his left was his sister,—she so fair, they two so dark, and all three so serious and wistful.

His hat was in his hand. The sun shone warmly on his glossy black hair. He looked as once before he had looked, when about to commence his recital of "Paradise Lost." His eyes were answering Genevra's as if his guiding star were clear to see.

She stood apart from the throng, with her father and old Doctor Pingle. How pale she was! She wavered where she stood, unsteadily. Her eyes were blazing with love's unspeakable despair. It seemed to her then, as she looked at Roger, that she should see those deep-set, saddened eyes gazing straight into hers for all eternity. It was almost too much to support.

As the boat swung away from the pier she pressed her hand to her heart to still its pain.



THE INEVITABLE

Farther and farther away drifted the ship. The gulf of water widened. Genevra was leaning oddly forward. The tie to her heart was being so strained that she felt as if something were about to break. The dread, irreparable loss she was then sustaining, the soul-sickening desolation which her life was about to become, were borne in upon her ruthlessly, vividly, all in one agonizing second.

There was the water, so darkly seething beneath her, the water to answer it all, and to end it all! But across the abyss came Roger's great strength, to pacify her soul, to bring her heroic endurance. As if on the breeze that blew from where he was, she heard him speaking:

"It would be so easy to die,—it takes so much courage to live."

She held up her face, in the bravery of all its tears. A something of sublimity crept to her heart.

The ship commenced slowly to turn its prow towards the great uncertainty of the open sea. Still Genevra saw him where he stood in his manhood; still Roger beheld her, as if she lingered alone on the pier.

They knew that, though a thousand years of time and a million miles of distance should intervene, that last long look would bridge the space forever.

THE END





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